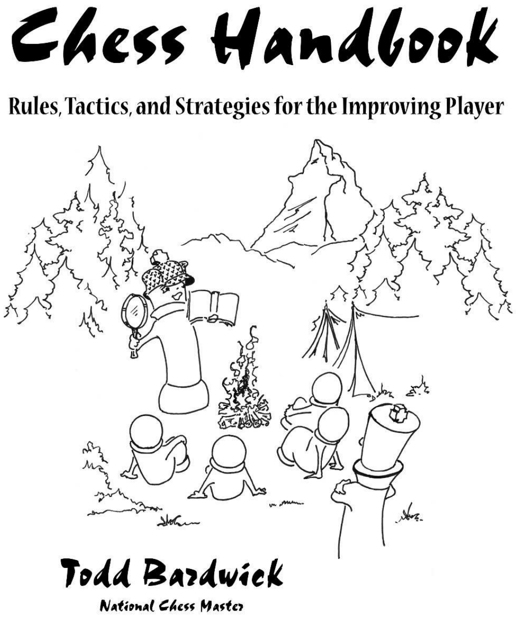
The Chess Detective® Presents

Chess Handbook

Rules, Tactics, and Strategies for the Improving Player

TODD BARDWICK

National Chess Master



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Chess Detective Press

Illustrations by John Weiss and Kevin Hempstead

Chess Handbook
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INTRODUCTION

Chess Handbook will teach you how to play chess and expand your knowledge of the game so you can enjoy playing it for a lifetime.

This is written as an instructional and reference book for both kids and adults.

We will first explore and then go way beyond the information you find in typical beginner chess books. As your chess skills improve, you will want to reference and refer back to many of the chess concepts and principles we will discuss.

This book is broken down into three sections.

Part 1 is the Rules. We will cover all of the rules of the game, the chess board, how the pieces move and what they are worth relative to each other, scorekeeping and chess notation, fundamentals like check and checkmate, the types of draws, the chess clock, and the touch move and touch take rules.

Part 2 is Tactics, which are the battles between the pieces. We will look at why it is important to count how many times pieces are attacked and defended as well as the basic types of tactics which include pins, skewers, forks, discoveries, removing the guard, and trapped pieces. Then you will be introduced to forcing moves, sacrifices, and more complex combinations.

Part 3 is Strategy. Chess strategy involves breaking down the position into each player’s strengths and weaknesses and developing the best plan. What you should be thinking about during both your and your opponent’s move, piece placement, the decision to trade or avoid trading pieces, and the types of advantages in chess will be covered in this section. Then we will further explore strategies and tips specifically for the opening, middlegame, and endgame.

Once you become comfortable with these basic tactics and strategies, you can move onto more difficult concepts and examples in my more advanced books, *Chess Tactics and Combinations Workbook, Chess Strategy Workbook,* and *Attacking the Chess King Workbook.*

The glossary in the back of the book gives a quick reference for chess terms and words that you may not be familiar with.

For proofreading and making suggestions on how to improve the book, I want to thank David Costantino and Alan Bardwick.

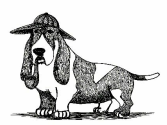
I would also like to thank the illustrators, John Weiss and Kevin Hempstead, for the clever and entertaining illustrations they created for this and the other books in the series.

Best wishes in your chess endeavors,

Todd Bardwick
National Chess Master

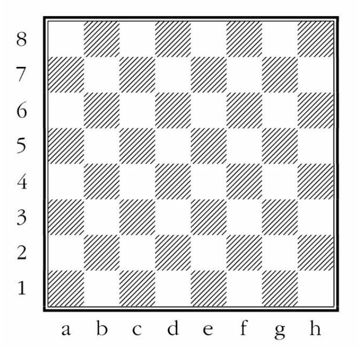
Part 1 - RULES

BASIC TRAINING



Chess Board

The chess board is 8 squares by 8 squares for a total of 64 squares.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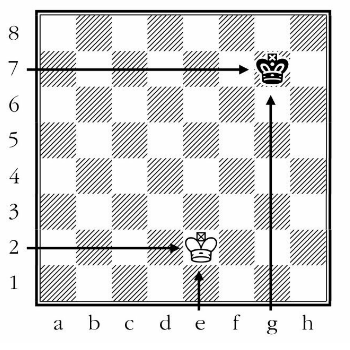
32 squares are white (or light) and
32 squares are black (or dark).

The name of each square is a lowercase letter, followed by the corresponding number.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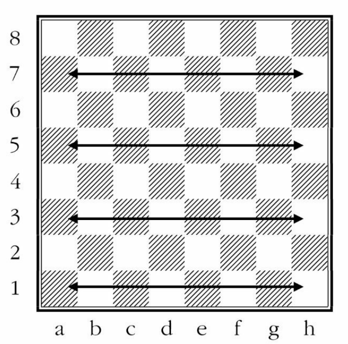
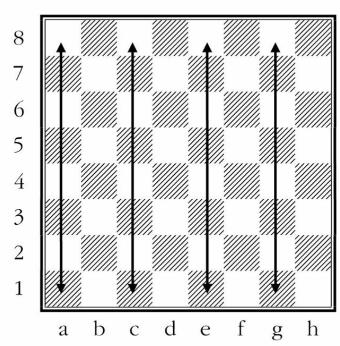
White's king is on e2.
Black's king is on g7.

Ranks, Files, and Diagonals



The rows are called ranks. Ranks are labeled 1 through 8.

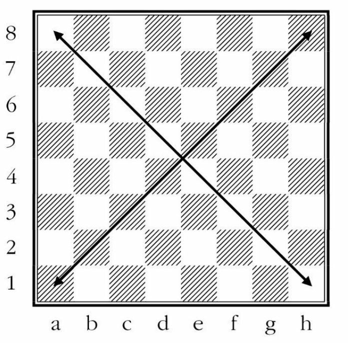


The columns are called files. Files are labeled a through h.

Ranks are referred to from each player's side of the board, with the first rank closest to the player and eighth rank furthest from the player. In the previous diagram the White king on e2 is on White's 2nd rank, which is Black's 7th rank.

This grid system stays the same regardless of which color you are playing, so the d4 square is always d4 whether or you are playing White or Black.

In the upcoming Scorekeeping section, we will discuss the numbers shown to the left of the chess diagrams.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The longest diagonals are the a1-h8 diagonal and the h1-a8 diagonal.

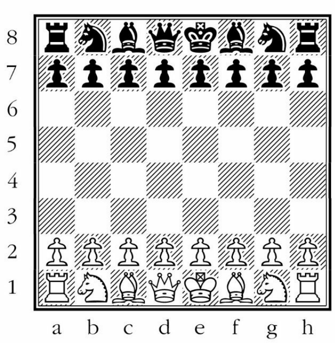
Starting Position

Every chess game starts with the same position. To orient the board correctly, from each player’s perspective, a white square should be in the lower right-hand corner. There is a chess saying, “White on Right.”

White’s pieces always start on rows 1 and 2. Black’s pieces line up symmetrically on the other side of the board on rows 7 and 8.

On each player’s back rank, the rooks start in the corner. Moving toward the center are knights, bishops, and then the king and queen.

The queen starts the game on her own color; the White queen on a white square (d1) and the Black queen on a black square (d8).



Each player begins the game with eight pawns and eight pieces.

White always moves first. White and Black take turns moving.

Chess Pieces

Pawns and five types of pieces are in a chess game.
There are light (White) pieces and dark (Black) pieces.

Here are the names of the pieces and their symbols:

King	K	♔	♚
Queen	Q	♕	♛
Rook	R	♖	♜
Bishop	B	♗	♝
Knight	N	♘	♞
Pawn	_	♙	♟

Each piece moves in a special way and has its own value. Neither player can capture their own pieces. When a piece is captured it is removed from the board.

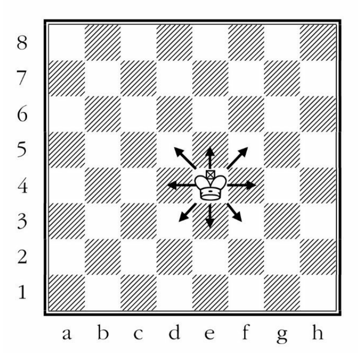
King

The king moves one square at time in any direction: forward, backward, left, right, or diagonally, as long he doesn't move to a square attacked by an opponent's piece.

Kings can capture an opponent's piece on the square that piece is on as long as it isn't protected by another piece.

Kings are slow moving and can eventually move to all 64 squares.

Each player has one king. He is worth the entire game and cannot be captured or traded.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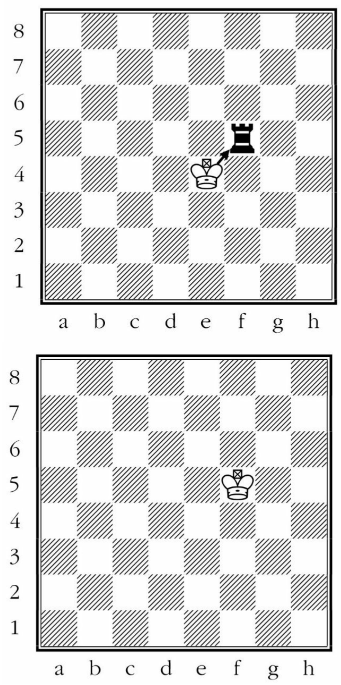
The king on e4 can move one square in any direction.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White’s king captures the rook on f5.

Castling

Castling is the only time when two pieces (king and rook) can move in one turn. Each player may only castle once per game and may not un-castle.

The purpose of castling is to move the king out of the center of the board where the action generally takes place and to bring one of the rooks toward the center and into the game.

The kingside is the side of the board where the kings begin the game (e-h files).

The queenside is the side of the board where the queens begin the game (a-d files).

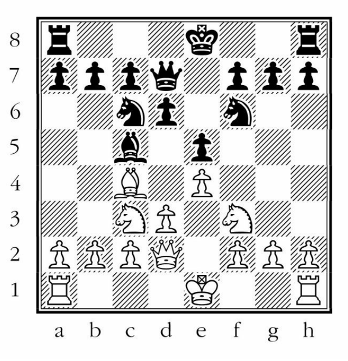
In order to castle kingside, the knight and bishop on the kingside must move off their original squares so that the squares between the king and rook are open. Pick up the king first and move him two squares to the g-file (g1 for White and g8 for Black) and then, with the same hand, pick up the rook and put it on the f-file (f1 for White and f8 for Black). The king always moves exactly two squares when castling. Castling kingside is scored 0-0 and sometimes referred to as *castling short*.

In order to castle queenside, the knight and bishop on the queenside, as well as the queen, must move off of their original squares to open up the squares between the king and rook. Pick up the king and move him two squares to the c-file (c1 for White and c8 for Black) and then, with the same hand, pick up the rook and put it on the d-file square (d1 for White and d8 for Black). Castling queenside is scored 0-0-0 and sometimes referred to as *castling long*.

In both cases, the king moves two squares and the rook jumps over him. Besides having all the pieces cleared out so that the king can “see” the rook, it is also a requirement that you haven’t moved the king or the rook you wish to castle with previously in the game.

You are also not allowed to castle if your king is currently under attack or would be attacked on either the square he would pass through or the square he would end up on after castling.

Each player has the choice of which side to castle on, or to not castle at all.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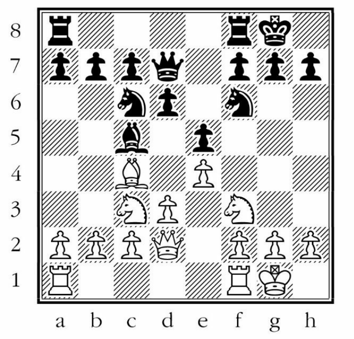
Position before castling.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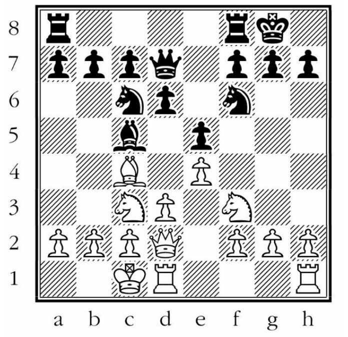
Both players castled kingside.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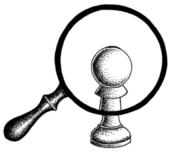
White castled queenside and Black castled kingside.

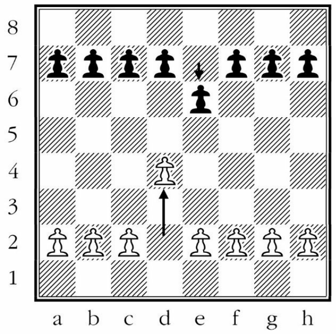
Pawn



If a piece of either color isn’t blocking its path and the pawn is on its original square, the pawn can move either one square or two squares forward.

After a pawn has moved, it can only move one square forward at a time. Pawns cannot move backwards or sideways.

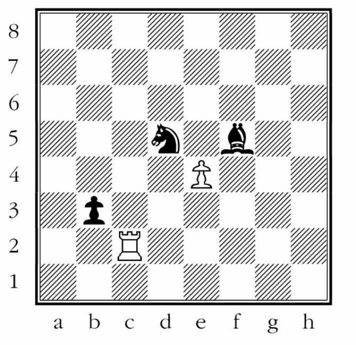
Each player begins the game with eight pawns.



White’s pawn moved two squares forward.
Black’s pawn moved one square forward.

Pawns capture one square forward in a diagonal direction.

The pawn is the only piece that captures differently than it normally moves.



The White pawn can either move to e5, capture the bishop, or capture the knight.

Black's pawn can move to b2 or capture White's rook on c2.

Pawns have the lowest value of any piece and are worth one point, or one pawn.

Promoting a pawn

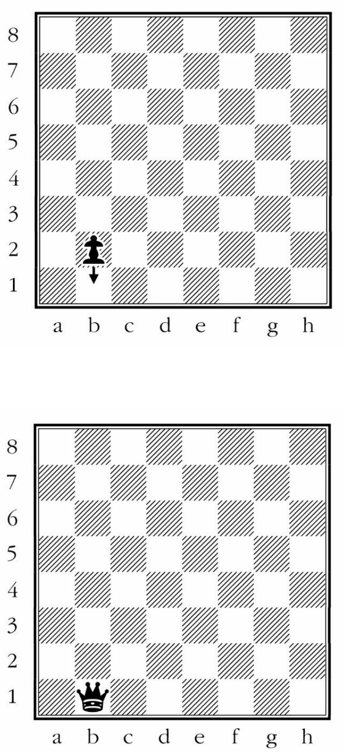
When a pawn moves to the eighth rank (all the way across the board), it must promote or turn into a queen, rook, bishop, or knight.

Usually the queen is selected because she is the most powerful piece. When the pawn isn't promoted to a queen, a knight is usually chosen because a knight moves differently than a queen, which may prove useful in certain situations. Promoting to a piece other than the queen is called *underpromoting*.

If your queen has been captured, you place the captured queen on the square where the pawn promotes. If the original queen is still on the board, and a pawn promotes to produce a second queen, you may place an upside-down captured rook or borrow a queen from another chess set to place on the promotion square. A pawn placed on its side or two pawns crisscrossed on their side (so they don't roll around) can also represent a queen that was promoted from a pawn. Some new chess sets come with an additional queen of each color to use when a pawn promotes to a second queen.

Pawns normally promote toward the end of the game since this is when the opponent has the fewest number of pieces remaining on the board to stop them.

Each player could potentially have nine queens since the game begins with one queen and eight pawns. Two queens are usually more than enough.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The Black pawn moves forward and promotes to a queen on b1.

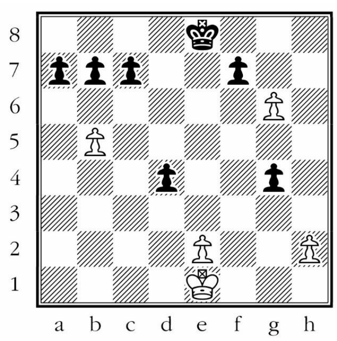
En passant

En passant means “in passing” in French and is a move that only involves pawns. It is a relatively rare move that can be a bit confusing.

En passant is a type of pawn capture which can only occur if a pawn is on the 5th rank and an opposing pawn on an adjacent file advances two squares forward from its original square. The pawn moving two squares forward can be captured by the pawn on the 5th rank as if it had moved only one square forward. This capture opportunity only exists for one move, immediately following the opposing pawn advancing two squares.

En passant can occur in any phase of the game.

If you don’t understand the notation below, take a look at the Scorekeeping section before continuing.



Let’s say it is White’s move. If he plays e4, Black can capture him *en passant* by responding …dxe3. If White plays h4, Black can capture the h-pawn *en passant* by playing …gxh3.

Now let’s assume it is Black’s move. If he plays …a5, White can capture *en passant* with bxa6. If Black plays …c5, White can take *en passant* with bxc6.

If Black plays …f5 or …f6, White cannot capture the pawn *en passant* with the g6 pawn because it is on the 6th rank, not the 5th rank.

Keep in mind the *en passant* capture opportunity is fairly rare, unlike this example with multiple *en passant* capture possibilities. But it can happen multiple times in a game, so be on the lookout for this special move.

Just because you have the opportunity to capture *en passant* does not mean that you should automatically play this capture move.

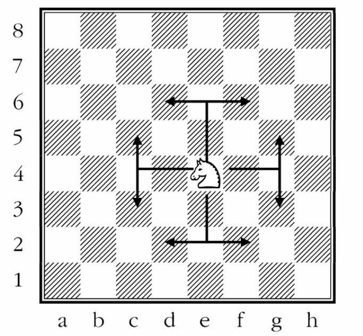
Your moves should always make sense and improve your position. Remember if you do choose to capture *en passant*, you must do so on the very next move after the pawn advances two squares, otherwise the opportunity for that particular *en passant* capture goes away and cannot be revisited later.

Knight

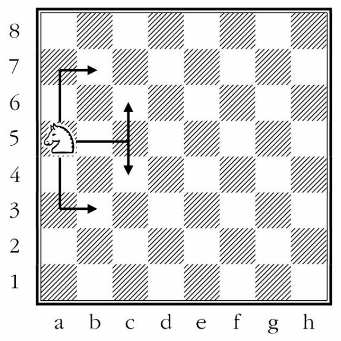
Knights move in a capital “L” shape, two squares in one direction, then one square to either side. Knights are the only piece that can jump over other pieces, whether they are your own or your opponent’s.

Knights move from one colored square to the other and then back again.

A knight can eventually move to every square on the board, but is a slow-moving piece.



The knight on e4 can move to eight squares: d2, f2, g3, g5, f6, d6, c5, or c3.



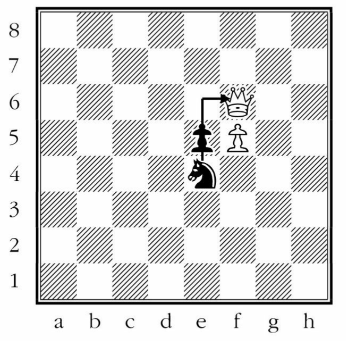
A knight on the rim can only move to four squares: b3, c4, c6 or b7.

Because knights are slow-moving pieces, they like to be located near the center of the board so that they can quickly move to any part of the board where they are needed.

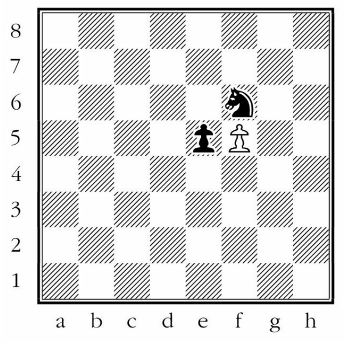
A knight on the edge of the board takes several moves to reach the other side of the board. There is an old chess rhyme, “A knight on the rim is dim.” The rim is the outer edge of the board and dim, rhyming with rim, means bad or weak.

Knights only capture by landing on an opponent’s piece, not by jumping over it.

A knight is worth three pawns in material.



Black’s knight jumps over the pawns and captures White’s queen on f6.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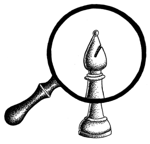
The knight does not capture the pawn on f5 in the process.

Bishop



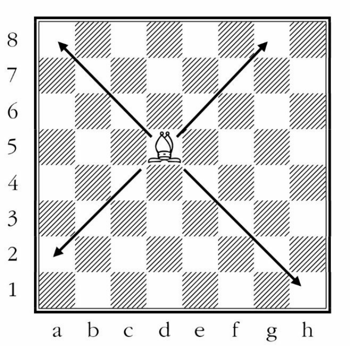
Bishops have a pointed shaped head with a diagonal slot in it.

The bishop moves diagonally and is a fast-moving, long-range piece.

Bishops cannot jump over pieces, so they need open space to be effective.

At the start of the game, each player has a bishop that can move on light squares and one that can move on dark squares. Each bishop’s movement is limited to the 32 squares on its color.

When a player has both bishops, it is called having the *bishop pair*.



Bishops can move to any square along a diagonal as long as there is not another piece obstructing its path.

Unlike knights, bishops cannot jump over other pieces.

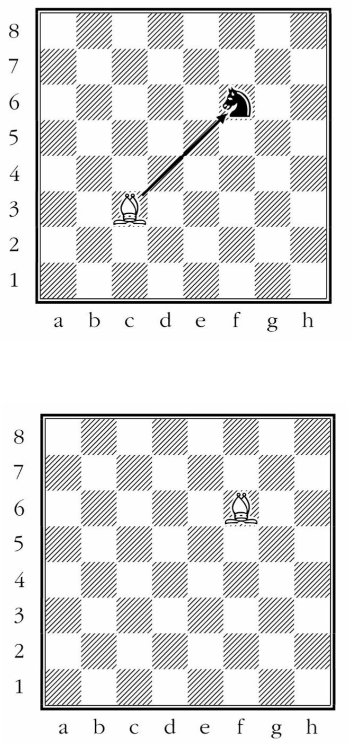
Bishops and knights are called minor pieces.

Comparing the two, the knight has the advantage of being able to touch each of the 64 squares, but is slow.

The bishop is fast, but each one can only touch 32 squares.

These powers tend to balance and cancel each other out on a 64 square chess board.

Bishops are roughly equal to knights in strength and are also worth three pawns in material.



The bishop on c3 captures the knight on f6.

Rook

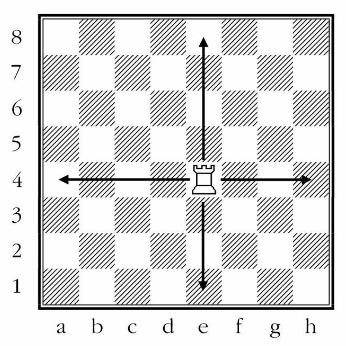
Rooks move horizontally along ranks and vertically along files and are fast-moving, long-range pieces that can move to all 64 squares.

Like bishops, rooks cannot jump.

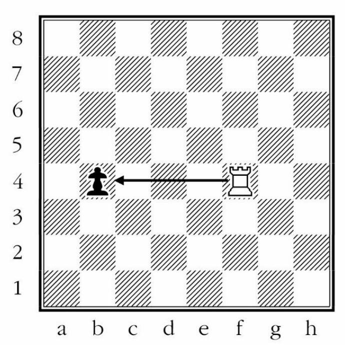
Comparing a rook to a knight, both can move to any of the 64 squares, but the rook is fast and the knight is slow. Therefore, rooks are usually more valuable than knights.

Comparing a rook to a bishop, both are fast. The rook can move to any of the 64 squares, while the bishop is limited to 32 squares. Again, the rook has the advantage.

Rooks are worth five pawns in material .



Rooks can move to any square forwards, backwards, left, or right.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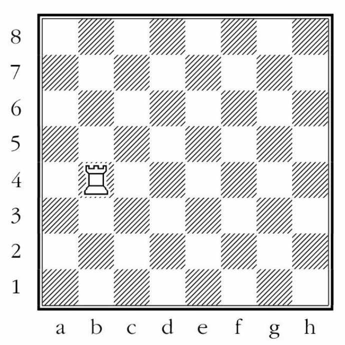
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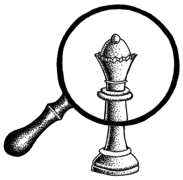
The rook captures the pawn on b4.

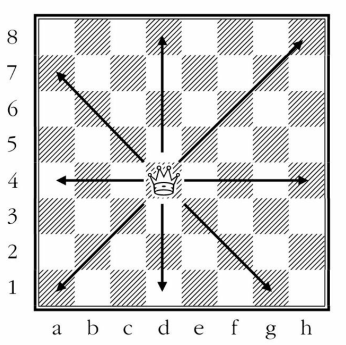
Queen



The queen is the combination of a rook and a bishop.

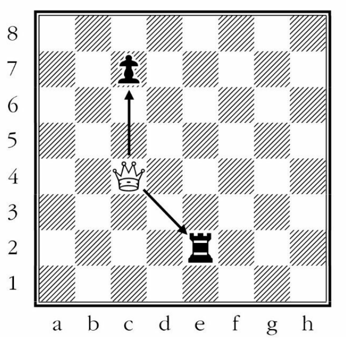
She moves horizontally and vertically like a rook, and diagonally like a bishop.

Queens and rooks are called major pieces.

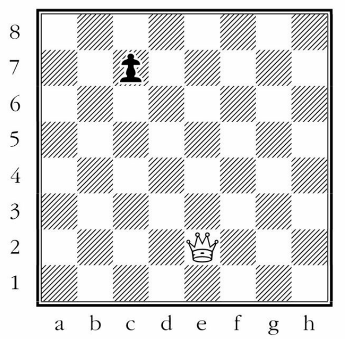


Like bishops and rooks, queens cannot jump over other pieces.

Queens are worth nine pawns in material, slightly more than a rook plus a bishop because, unlike a bishop which is restricted to one color, queens have the ability to move diagonally on either colored square.



The queen can capture either the pawn or the rook.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She captures the more valuable rook.

Material

Based on material alone, you can do the math to determine good trades and bad trades. It is usually a good idea to trade a piece of lesser value for a piece or pieces of greater value.

Here is a summary of the piece values:

pawn = 1
knight = 3
bishop = 3
rook = 5
queen = 9
king - cannot be traded

Would you trade a rook for a bishop and a knight? Yes, since 5 is less than 3 + 3 = 6.

How about two rooks for a queen? No, because 10 is greater than 9.

Would you trade a bishop for three pawns? Maybe, since they are both worth three points or three pawns.

Don’t fall in love with any particular piece and refuse to trade it for pieces which add up to a greater value.

Material is one type of advantage in chess, but not the only type. Sometimes a “weaker” piece is actually the right one for the job, so make sure you understand each piece’s special abilities and how they can help you during the game.

Scorekeeping

Players record the moves of the game so that they have a record of it and can go back and play it over at a later date. The most common chess language (used in this book) is called algebraic notation. Older chess books are often written in descriptive notation (like 1.P-K4 P-QB4, etc.).

Algebraic notation has two parts to it: the piece that moves and the square it moves to.

A White move is written after the move number and a period.

If Black's move is not written immediately after White's move, Black's move is written after the move number and three periods (for example 9…Ne5).

Remember the symbols for each piece – K is for king, Q for queen, R for rook, B for bishop, N for knight, and no letter or a blank for the pawn.

On the first move of the game, say White moves the pawn in front of his king two squares forward. This move would be written 1.e4.

Recall that castling kingside is written 0-0, and castling queenside is 0-0-0. Therefore, 0-0-0 for White would mean that his king moves from e1 to c1 and the queen's rook moves from a1 to d1.

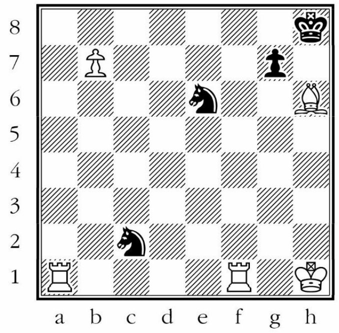
When a piece is captured, an x is placed between the piece making the capture and the square the captured piece occupied. The name of the captured piece is not recorded.

When a king is placed in check, a + sign is written after the move. Double check is when a king is attacked by two pieces on the same move and is scored ++.

Checkmate is often recorded with # or the word “mate” after the checkmating move. Sometimes you will see 1-0 when White wins or 0-1 when Black wins.

A draw (tie) is recorded ½ - ½.

Here are some examples.



Pawn captures: Say it is Black's 34th move and he captures White's bishop with his g-pawn. This would be written 34… gxh6.

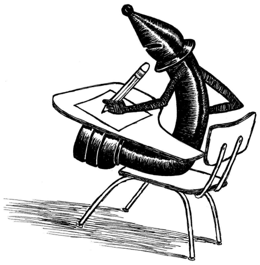
Promoting a pawn: It is White's 51st move and he promotes the pawn to a queen, while putting Black's king in check. This move would be scored 51. b8=Q+.

Sometimes two pieces of the same type (normally rooks or knights) can move to a square in common to both of them. In this case, the moving piece must be identified.
Let's say on White's 41st move, he moves his rook on a1 to c1. (Note that the f1 rook can also move to c1.) This move would be written 41.Rac1 (as opposed to 41.Rfc1 if the rook on f1 moved to c1).

Let's say it is Black's 41st move and he moves his knight on e6 to d4. The move could be written 41…Ned4 or 41…N6d4 (as opposed to 41…Ncd4 or 41…N2d4 if the c2 knight had moved to d4). After the piece's name, the letter of the file is typically chosen before the number of the rank to identify which piece moved. If both pieces are on the same file, then the number of the rank is used.

If the move is better or worse than an average move, a punctuation mark describing the move's quality may be placed after it.

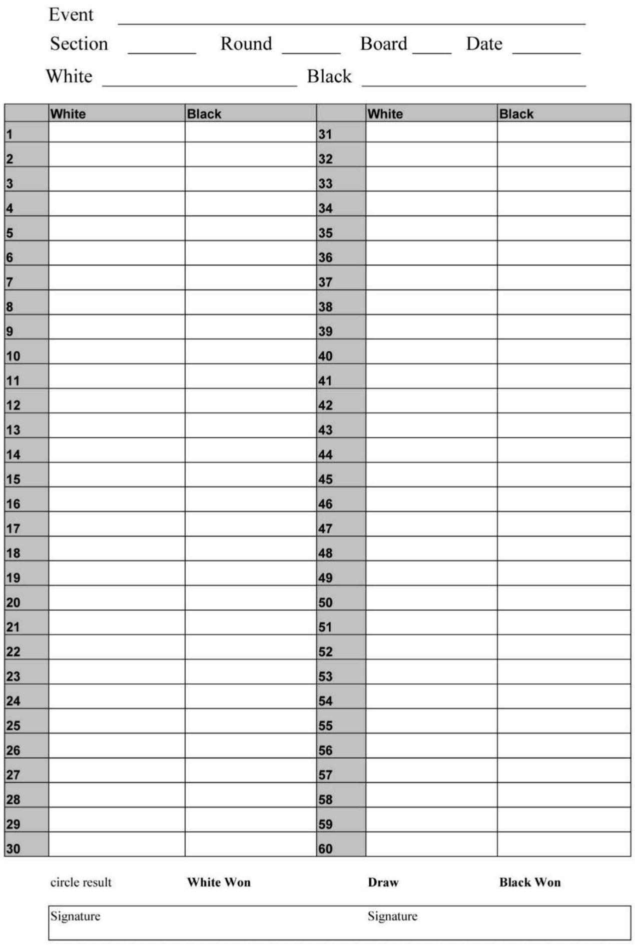
!! is a brilliant move
! is a good move
!? is an interesting move deserving attention
?! is a questionable or dubious move
? is a bad move
?? is a terrible move or a blunder



In a tournament, both players should fill out a scoresheet (below). The space for Round is the game number and Board is the board number where the game will be played.

White’s first move is written in the White column in the box next to move 1. Black’s first move is written to the right of White’s move in the Black column, and so on down the sheet.

Both players sign the scoresheet after circling the result at the bottom of the page.



Event ____

Section _______ Round ______ Board ____ Date _______

White ____________________ Black ________________________

	White	Black		White	Black
1			31		
2			32		
3			33		
4			34		
5			35		
6			36		
7			37		
8			38		
9			39		
10			40		
11			41		
12			42		
13			43		
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19			49		
20			50		
21			51		
22			52		
23			53		
24			54		
25			55		
26			56		
27			57		
28			58		
29			59		
30			60		

circle result **White Won** **Draw** **Black Won**

Signature	Signature

Check

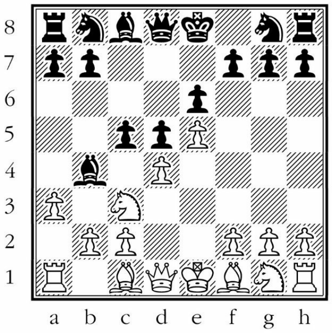
Check occurs when one of the kings is attacked by an opposing piece. When a king is in check, the player MUST make a move to escape the check. No other types of moves are allowed on that turn.

There are three possible ways to escape check: capture the checking piece, block the check by interposing a piece, or move the king to a square that isn't attacked.

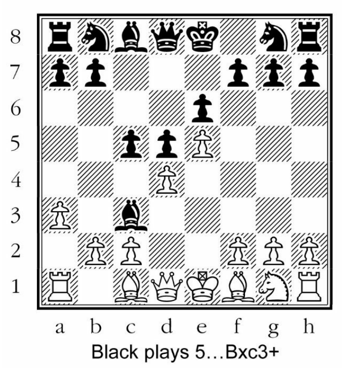
Check can occur in the opening (start of the game), middlegame (middle of the game), or endgame (end of the game when few pieces remain on the board).

You don't have to say "check" like they do in the movies, though for beginners it is encouraged so both players understand the situation.

Players are not allowed to capture kings. If a player's king is still in check after he moves, he made an illegal move. If this occurs, the player must undo the illegal move and make a legal move.



Position after 5.a3



Black plays 5…Bxc3+

Black captured White's knight with his bishop, placing White's king in check.

White has four ways to escape check: **6.Ke2**, **6.Bd2,** **6.Qd2**, and **6.bxc3**.

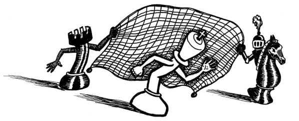
Moving the king out of check with **6.Ke2** is a bad move since the king moves toward the center of the board, he can no longer castle, and he blocks the bishop on f1 from entering the game. 6.Ke2 also allows Black's bishop to escape and win the d4 pawn with 6…Bxd4.

Blocking with **6.Bd2** also allows the bishop to escape and win more material after 6…Bxd4 or 6…Bxb2.

Blocking with the queen by playing **6.Qd2** is even worse because of 6…Bxd2+ capturing the queen.

White's best move is **6.bxc3** recapturing the bishop with the pawn. Material is even.

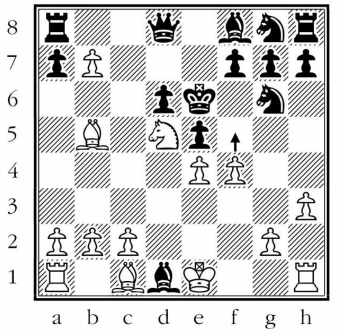
Checkmate



The object of the game is to checkmate your opponent's king.

Checkmate occurs when the king is in check, and there is no way to capture the checking piece, block the check by interposing a piece, or move the king to a square that isn't attacked.

Checkmate can occur in any phase of the game. A *mating net* describes the processes where a king is trapped and checkmated, like caught in a net.



Position after 11…Ke6
White to move

In this early middlegame position, White can play **12.f5 mate**.

Black cannot escape the pawn check.

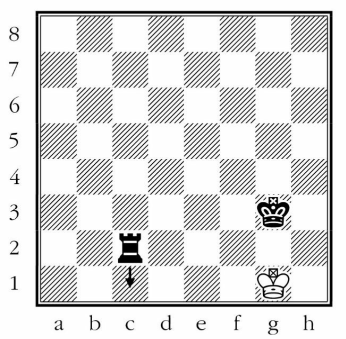
The Black king cannot capture the pawn on f5 or the knight on d5 because both are protected by the e4 pawn.

There is no vacant square in between the pawn and the king to allow Black to block the check.

Black's king cannot move to f6 or e7 because of White's knight.

White's bishop on b5 prevents Black's king from moving to d7.

Black is checkmated and White wins the game.



Position after 47.Kg1 (from h1)
Black to move

Here is the basic checkmate position in the endgame with a king and a rook.

Black can play **47...Rc1 mate**.

The rook attacks White's king on g1 as well as the f1 and h1 squares.

White's king cannot move to f2, g2, or h2 because Black's king attacks those squares.

Note that if the rook were a queen on c2, moving her to b1, c1, d1, or g2 would be checkmate.

Draws

A chess game that ends in a tie is called a draw.

In a chess tournament, the player who wins the game gets one point and the losing player gets zero points. Both players receive half a point if the game ends in a draw.

Generally, the player with the worse position is happy with a draw and the player with the better position is trying to avoid a draw.

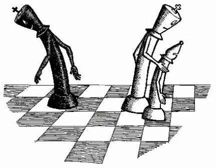
The different types of chess draws are:

- Insufficient mating material
- Stalemate
- Threefold repetition
- 50-move draw
- Draw by agreement (the draw offer)

Clock draws:

- Both flags are down (both players run out of time)
- Flag is down, but player with time remaining has insufficient mating material

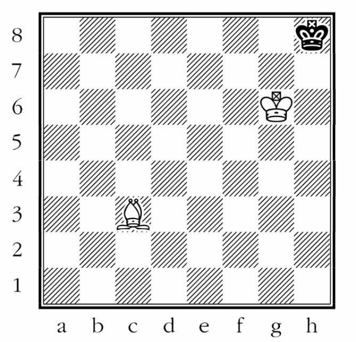
Insufficient mating material



An insufficient mating material draw occurs when neither player has enough material remaining on the board to force checkmate.

An endgame position where all the pieces are traded and only kings remain on the board is the most common type of insufficient mating material draw.

King + knight vs. king and king + bishop vs. king are also draws by insufficient mating material because the player who is ahead doesn't have enough material to force mate.



Black's king has least number of possible escape squares in the corner.

White's king in this position is as close as he can get to the Black king and he attacks both the g7 and h7 squares.

The bishop puts the Black's king in check by attacking the h8 square (the bishop also attacks g7).

White does not have enough material on the board to prevent Black's king from escaping to g8.

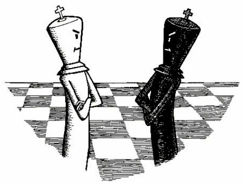
Therefore, it is impossible for White to checkmate Black and the game is declared a draw by insufficient mating material.

Having only one pawn remaining on the board is not an insufficient mating material draw because the pawn has the potential to promote to a queen or rook.

A major piece is sufficient mating material to checkmate a king as we will examine in the Endgame Strategy section in Part 3.

Insufficient mating material draws are common in both master games and games between amateurs.

Stalemate

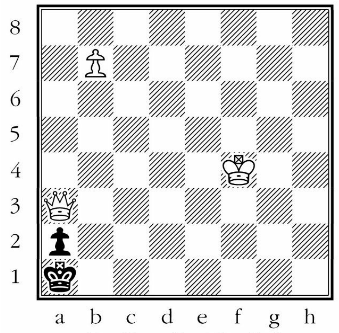


The rules of chess require that players alternate making moves.

When it is a player's move and there are no legal moves with any of his pieces and his king is not in check, it is called a stalemate and the game ends in a draw.

The player who is winning does not want the game to end in stalemate.

The player who is losing may be very happy with a stalemate, especially if it occurs in a position where he is losing badly.



Position after 52…Ka1
White to move

White can checkmate Black by playing **53.Qc1 mate**.

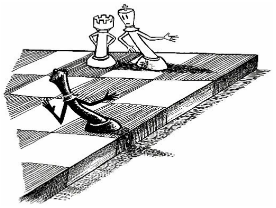
If he instead promoted his pawn to queen with **53.b8=Q?** the game would end in a stalemate since Black's king cannot move to b1 and his pawn is blocked by his king, resulting in no legal moves.

Promoting to a rook with **53.b8=R?** would also be stalemate.

Stalemates are rare in master games since masters calculate several moves ahead and if a position occurs where the opponent has no legal moves, the stalemate position is spotted well ahead of time and avoided.

Stalemates often occur in games between novice players because a player promoted too many pawns into queens. Novice players also tend to ignore what their opponent is doing.

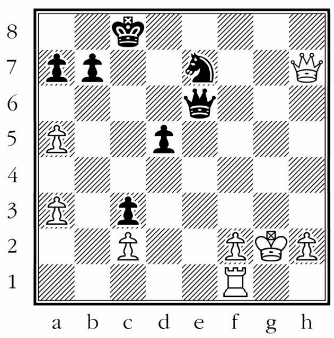
Threefold repetition



If the same identical position (for both the white and black pieces) occurs three different times, the game is drawn by threefold or three-move repetition. The moves do not have to repeat consecutively, but usually do.

Triple occurrence of the position is the technical term for this type of draw in the rulebook.

The most common type of threefold repetition is referred to as *perpetual check*. This occurs when one player, typically the one who is losing the game, can check the opposing king back and forth forever, with no way for the king to escape.



Position after 21.Kxg2 (R)
Black to move

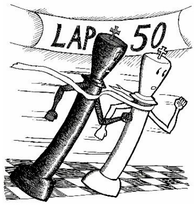
White is ahead *the exchange* (rook for a knight) and a pawn in material.

Black saves the game by playing **21…Qg4+ 22.Kh1 Qf3+ 23.Kg1 Qg4+ 24.Kh1 Qf3+ 25.Kg1 Qg4+ 26.Kh1** and the game is a drawn by threefold repetition.

A way to look at a threefold repetition draw is to imagine that after every move, you take a photograph of the board. If three of the photos are identical with the same player to move, a threefold repetition draw can be claimed.

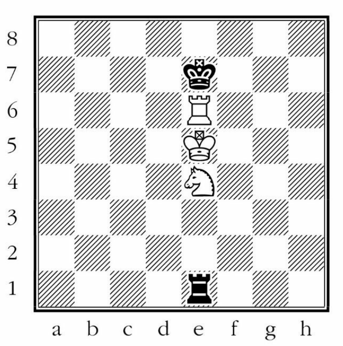
In games between younger players, threefold repetition draws often happen by accident or when the players are having fun moving back and forth repeatedly.

50-move draw



The rarest type of draw is the 50-move draw. If fifty full moves occur (a complete move is a move pair, where both players make a move) where no pieces have been captured and no pawns have moved, then the game is declared a draw. Fifty is an arbitrarily set number of moves decided years ago to prevent the game from going on forever.

When a piece is captured or a pawn moves the fifty-move count starts over again. A pawn move is progress toward promoting to a queen and a piece capture changes the position enough to justify starting the count over, so be aware of those moves when they occur late in a game.



Position after 93.Rxe6+ (p)
Black to move

A 50-move draw count began in this position from the Colorado Open on September 3-4, 1995, where I was playing Black against Senior Master David Lucky.

Black must survive 50 moves without getting checkmated, losing his rook for free, or losing his rook for White’s knight (note there are no pawns left on the board).

Black is willing to trade rooks, since the game would then end with an insufficient mating material draw.

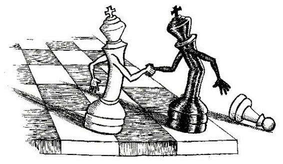
I survived 50 moves and claimed a draw on move 143, exactly 12 hours after the game started, making it is the longest continuous game to take place in the United States between masters.

The world record for the longest continuous game ever played between masters was a draw between Ivan Nikolic and Goran Arsovic that took place in Belgrade, Yugoslavia on February 17, 1989. It was a rook and bishop vs. rook ending that lasted 269 moves and took 20 hours and 15 minutes!

The average length of a chess game between masters is about forty or fifty moves. The 50-move draw rarely occurs because the fifty move count usually starts after this point, late in the endgame, after all the pawns are captured.

The 50-move draw typically occurs at the beginner level when the player with the advantage does not know how to checkmate the king and just chases him around the board.

Draw by agreement (the draw offer)



Either player can offer a draw.

It is proper etiquette to offer a draw as you make your move (so you don’t interrupt your opponent while he is thinking about his next move) and just before starting your opponent's clock.

The opponent can accept or decline the draw offer immediately or choose to think about it before making a decision. If he decides to think about it, he loses the elapsed time on the clock.

The draw offer only stands for one move.

If your opponent offers a draw, try to figure out why he thinks he is worse off since he probably wouldn’t offer a draw if he thinks he is winning.

It is considered bad etiquette to repeatedly offer a draw or make the offer in a clearly lost position.

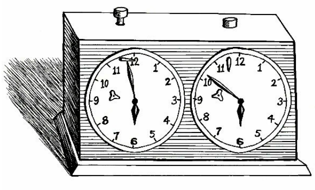
A player might offer a draw with a winning position with limited time left on his clock to avoid risking a loss by running out of time or when a draw will guarantee winning a tournament.

Chess Clock

A chess clock is two separate clocks in one housing with a button above each clock.

Only one clock runs at a time. When a player makes a move, he pushes the button down on his side of the clock, which stops his clock and starts his opponent's clock. It is proper etiquette to push the button with the same hand that you use to move the piece.

Analog clocks have a flag that is raised by the big minute hand a few minutes before the top of the hour. The convention is to set the clock so that the end of the time control is at 6:00. [For a 30 minute game (G/30) set the clocks at 5:30 at the start of the game. For a 60 minute game (G/60), set the clocks at 5:00.] At exactly 6:00 the flag will fall and the player will run out of time. In a tournament, only the players involved in the game are allowed to call the flag. The tournament director or a spectator should not call the flag.



On this analog chess clock, the player on the left's clock is running because the button on top of his clock is raised. His flag is being raised by the big hand and in about two minutes, at 6:00, it will fall.

The player on the right has about eight minutes left on his clock. The triangle on the left side of each clock face will rotate when it is that player's move, representing the seconds as they tick away.

When the player on the left makes his move, he will push down his button, which will stop his clock and start the clock for the player on the right. The button above the clock of the player on the right will rise when the left side button is pushed down.

Digital clocks are a newer technology that count down to the final second left in the game. Time runs out when the clock reads 0:00:00.

Most digital clocks have time-delay and increment features that are commonly used in tournaments. The time-delay feature can be set to allow typically 5 seconds to pass after the opponent stops his clock before the player's clock starts to run.

In slower tournament games with a specified increment time control, the increment feature typically adds 30 seconds to the player's remaining time after he determines each move and pushes his button.

In chess tournaments, the players have a predetermined amount of time to make all their moves.

If a player runs out of time, his opponent can claim a win, provided he has sufficient mating material on the board.

The players can use as much or as little time on each move as they would like, but don't run out or else you can't win!

It is best to pace yourself. If you move too fast, chances are you will make mistakes. If you move too slowly, the quality of the moves improve, but so does the risk of losing the game on time.

In scholastic tournaments for children, a typical time control is game in 30 minutes.

The time control for adult tournaments is typically much longer (a slower game) with a delay or increment. A popular tournament time control is 90 minutes for each player with a 30 second increment.

Both flags are down

When both player’s flags have fallen, they are both out of time and the game is a draw.

Usually this occurs when both players are short of time, and with their attention primarily focused on the board, they didn't notice which flag fell first.

Flag is down, but player has insufficient mating material

When a player with insufficient mating material claims his opponent has run out of time, he can only claim a draw because a win is impossible on the board.

All he needs is a pawn (the possibility to win) to claim a win on time because a pawn can promote to a queen, which is sufficient mating material.

“Touch move” and “Touch take” rules

“Touch move” means when you touch a piece, you have to move it - if you can move it legally.

“Touch take” means when you touch an opponent’s piece, you must take it - if the piece can be legally captured.

A move is completed when you release the piece.

Sometimes young players have trouble with this because they want to touch each piece as they are considering moving it. An easy way to break this habit is to sit on your hands until you are sure what move you want to make.

If one of the pieces is not centered on its square, the player whose move it is can say, “I adjust” or less commonly, “j’adoube” [French], and then center the piece on the correct square. The player is then not required to move that piece.

The player must say, “I adjust,” before touching the piece to undo the “touch move” rule.

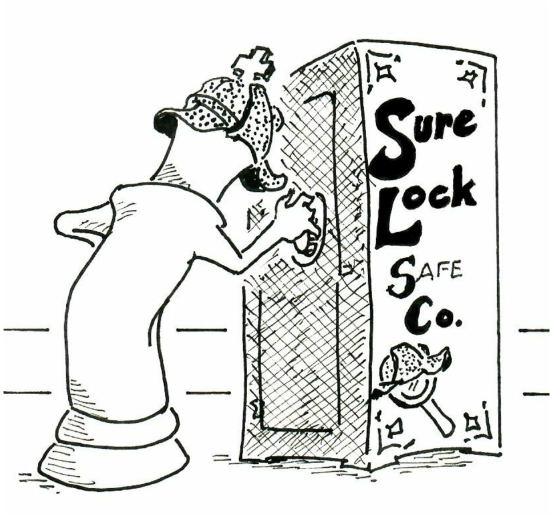
These rules are all strictly enforced in chess tournaments.

It is best to practice these rules in casual games.

When you castle, because of the “touch move” rule, you must move the king first because if you touch the rook first, the rook has a legal move which must then be made.

It is also good form to touch your piece first prior to making a capture instead of touching the opponent’s piece first. If you change your mind, you might still have a good move to make with your piece, but if you touched your opponent’s piece first, you would be obligated to capture it. Generally, do not touch your opponent’s pieces until you capture them with your pieces.

Part 2 - TACTICS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Tactics are the battles between pieces.

It is important to win your opponent’s pieces when the opportunity arises and to be careful not to lose your own pieces.

The player with more space and active pieces on optimal squares has a distinct advantage because, all things being equal, that player’s pieces have more freedom to create threats and opportunities.

After each move, ask yourself what your opponent is threatening. He can threaten more than one thing. If you don’t ask this, you will have lots of unpleasant surprises. When you are playing a chess game, you are really playing against yourself; search for the best moves for each player.

Most chess players focus all their attention on finding the best move.

You cannot correctly determine the best move without first understanding the position.

Picking up tactical clues and observing how the pieces are lined up is critical - you need to be a good detective and look for strengths and weaknesses in the position, which may be in the form of an exposed king, pieces lined up for a potential pin or fork, a potential back rank mate, an overworked piece, or maybe a piece surrounded by its enemies that could be trapped.

Once you pick up an important clue in the position on the board, it is important you don’t forget it. There is a lot to keep track of and the novice player has a tendency to forget important clues that have been discovered.

Take your time, there is lots to think about, and always assume your opponent will play the best move.

Play close attention to what your pieces and your opponent’s pieces are attacking and defending and how they are lined up; this is when tactics occur.

When a sequence of trades takes place, it generally a good idea to capture with the least valuable piece first (or a pawn if possible) so you don’t lose material during the trade.

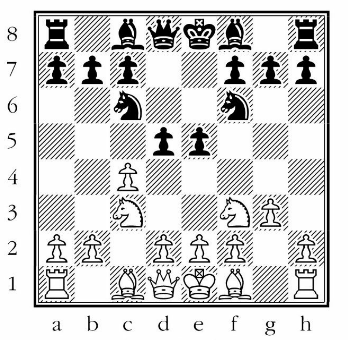
Of course, everything must be calculated slowly and carefully, and general rules do not always hold; every chess position is unique.

All the individual tactics we will discuss in this section can also be used in combination with other tactics.

Counting

A basic element of tactics is counting how many times a piece or square is attacked and defended. Although this is often not highlighted in tactics books, it is one of the most important things you need to do every move.

It is like asking how many good guys are there and how many bad guys are there. Outnumbering your opponent is important to gaining a material advantage.

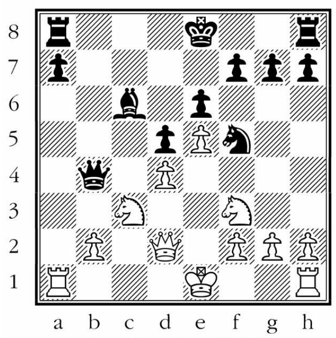


Position after 4…d5
White to move

By playing 4…d5, Black is attacking White’s pawn on c4, which is undefended.

Black’s d5 pawn is attacked twice, by White’s c4 pawn and c3 knight, and protected twice, by the knight on f6 and the queen.

Black’s pawn on e5 is attacked once, by the White knight on f3, and is protected by the knight on c6.



Position after 17.Qd2
Black to move

White’s knight on c3 attacks Black’s pawn on d5. The pawn is protected twice, by the bishop on c6 and pawn on e6.
White’s a1 rook attacks Black’s a7 pawn, which is protected once by the rook on a8.
Black’s queen attacks both White’s pawn on b2, which is protected by White’s queen, and the knight on c3, which is protected by the b2 pawn and the queen.
Black attacks White’s d4 pawn twice, with the knight and queen. The pawn is protected twice, by White’s knight and queen.
All the pieces are safe.

A common and deadly mistake made by beginner and intermediate chess players is either hanging (leaving a piece open to capture, or in chess terms, *en prise* [French]) their own pieces or not realizing that their opponent has left pieces hanging and vulnerable to capture.

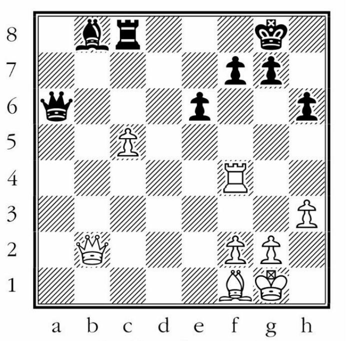
Most novice chess players don't spend enough time considering what their opponent is threatening. Always look to see what harm your opponent can do to you.

Free Stuff

“Free stuff” is the situation when a piece is vulnerable to capture because it is attacked more times than it is defended.

As mentioned in the previous section, the number of times a piece is attacked and defended is one of the most important elements in chess.

The most common form of “free stuff” at the beginner level is a piece that is attacked once and has no defender, making capture possible.



Position after 29.c5
Black to move

After 29.c5, Black could capture White’s undefended pawn by playing 29…Rxc5.

Black’s bishop is attacking White’s rook.

He quickly captured the rook with **29…Bxf4?** because the rook is worth more than the pawn.

Black was shocked when White captured his queen with **30.Bxa6**.

Black is now losing, not winning.

What went wrong?

First, he didn’t look at the entire board and ask what

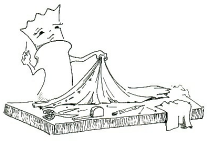
White was threatening. If he had noticed White’s bishop and queen on the same diagonal, he wouldn’t have grabbed the rook.

Second, he made a quick move and took the bait. Fast moves are bad moves because chess is complicated with lots of things to consider.

Take your time and assume your opponent is making smart moves.

Before you make a move, always make sure you aren’t giving away any of your pieces. Also make sure your opponent didn’t leave any free pieces for you to capture.

Pins



Pins are one of the most common tactical motifs.

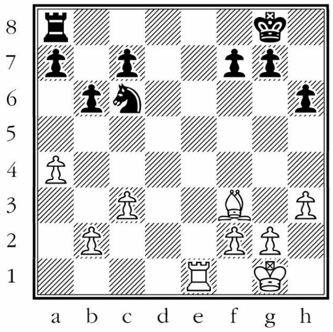
A pin is when a long-range piece (queen, rook, or bishop) attacks an opponent's piece or pawn that shields a piece of equal or greater value. If the pinned piece or pawn moves, the piece behind it would then be vulnerable to attack since it is on the same line. It is a metaphor for a real pin: a thin, long, pointed piece of metal that can poke through different layers of clothing, in a straight line.

The first piece in line is said to be pinned to the second piece.

Any piece or pawn is vulnerable to a pin.

A *relative pin* is when the shielded piece is any piece other than the king.

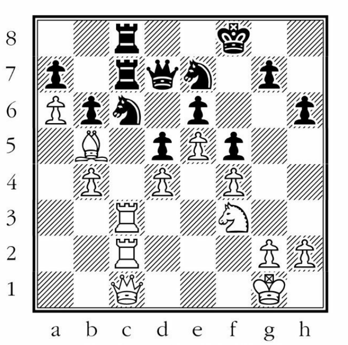
In the case of a relative pin, it is generally not a good idea to move the pinned piece unless it can produce a bigger threat of its own, like a check, because the more valuable shielded piece behind it would be exposed.



Position after 32.Bf3
Black to move

After playing 32.Bf3, White’s bishop pins Black’s knight to his rook. The knight is attacked once, and cannot be defended.

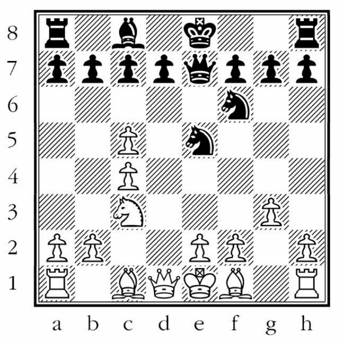
If the knight moves, the bishop can capture the more valuable rook.



Position after 26...Rbc8
White to move

Black's knight on c6 is pinned in two directions simultaneously.
It is pinned to the queen by the bishop on b5 and to the rook on c7 on the c-file. If the knight moves, the rook would be attacked three times and defended only twice.
The knight on c6 is attacked four times by the bishop, both rooks, and the queen.
It is defended four times by the knight, both rooks, and the queen.
Because Black's pieces are all tied up defending the pinned knight, White was able to break through and eventually win the game.

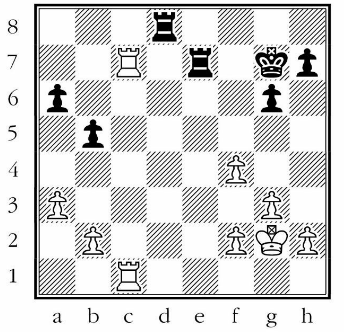
An *absolute pin* is when the piece shielded by the pinned piece is the king. It is illegal to move the pinned piece since it would place the king in check, so the pinned piece absolutely cannot move.


Position after 7.dxc5 (B)
Black to move

Black can checkmate White by playing **7…Nf3 mate.** White cannot capture with knight with his e2 pawn because of the absolute pin of the pawn to his king by Black's queen on e7.

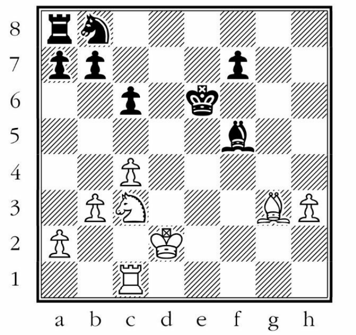
A *partial pin* is when a queen or rook is pinned along the same file or rank or a queen or bishop is pinned along the same diagonal.

In this case, the pinned piece can move, but cannot leave the line of attack without exposing the more valuable piece it is shielding.


Position after 43.Rc7
Black to move

Black's rook on e7 is partially pinned to the king. It cannot move up or down the e-file, but can move to d7 or f7 on the line between Black's king and White's rook on c7.

Pieces can also be pinned to a square.


Position after 37.Bg3
Black to move

Let’s say Black captures White’s pawn by playing **37… Bxh3?**

This would allow White to play **38.Rh1**, pinning the bishop to the h8 square.

After Black’s bishop moves, White can play **39.Rh8,** pinning Black’s knight to the rook on a8.

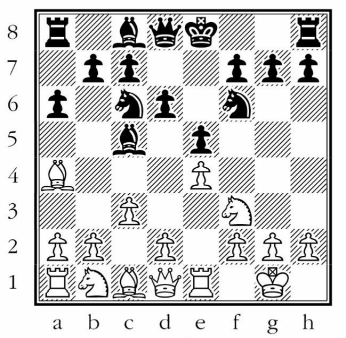
The knight is lost because it is attacked twice, defended once, and cannot be protected a second time.

If the knight moves, White can win the more valuable rook.

Freeing a pinned piece is called *breaking the pin*.

Possible ways to break a pin are to move the more valuable piece out of the pin, chase away or capture the pinning piece, or block the pin with a less valuable piece, like interposing with a pawn.

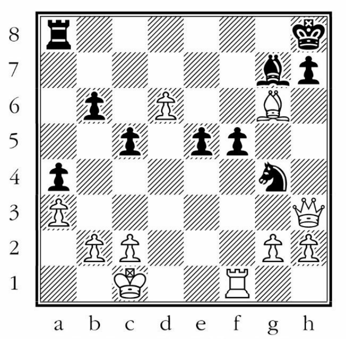
Another way to gain time or a tempo (move) to get out of a pin is when one of the pieces involved in the pin moves, making a bigger threat against one of the opponent’s pieces, like checking the king.


Position after 7.Re1
Black to move

Black’s knight on c6 is pinned to the king by the bishop on a4.

Black can break the pin with **7…b5**, **7…Bd7**, **7…Nd7**, or moving the king by playing **7…0-0**.

7…Qd7 breaks the pin of the knight to the king, but pins the knight to the queen.


Position after 27.Bxg6 (p)
Black to move

White captured a pawn with 27.Bxg6, thinking he wins the pawn because his queen pins the h7 pawn to Back’s king.

Black can break the pin, while blocking the queen on the h-file with **27…Bh6+**.

After **28.Kb1**, Black can then capture the bishop with **28…hxg6**.

Tips on Pins

- Because a pin limits what the pinned piece can do, look for ways to pin your opponent’s pieces to each other and try to avoid allowing your opponent to pin your pieces.

- If the pieces are of equal value, you generally don’t want to trade your piece that is pinning your opponent’s piece for the pinned piece (like a bishop pinning a knight to the king) unless you acquire something for it because at that moment, the pinning piece is stronger because it still has the freedom to move, giving it more mobility.

- Typical ways to take advantage of a pinned piece are to attack it with a less valuable piece or pawn or to pile on and try to attack it more times than it is defended. Since the pinned piece cannot move, it is often a race to see if the attacker can quickly bring more attackers than the defender can bring protectors. “Pin it and win it” is a common chess expression.

- Another way the attacker can gain a relative advantage in number of attackers vs. defenders and win a pinned piece is by capturing one of the pinned piece’s defenders. Counting and taking into account the value of the pieces that are captured is a critical calculation.

- A pinned piece can’t be counted on to defend another piece or attack a square it normally could.

- The best way to find pins is to always be observant and look for situations where pins occur. Train your mind to notice when pieces are in a straight line. If they are lined up on the same diagonal, look for the enemy bishop or queen that can pin them. If they are on the same file or rank, look for the enemy rook or queen.

Skewers

A metal skewer is a sharp, straight object like a giant pin that pokes through meat and vegetables to make shish kabobs or roast marshmallows.

A skewer in chess is the reverse of a pin.

The skewering piece “sees” a piece in front of it that shields a piece of equal or lesser value behind it. The second piece, located on the same file, rank, or diagonal, becomes exposed and often gets captured after the more valuable piece in front of it moves to safety.

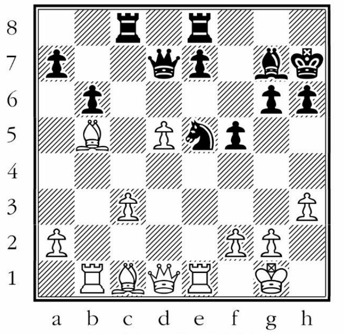
The first piece in line is said to be skewered to the second piece.

Any piece is vulnerable to a skewer, but only a long-range piece can do the skewering.

An X-ray or X-ray attack is sometimes used as a synonym for a skewer and occurs when a piece “looks through” an enemy piece toward a target, like a mating square, or defends a friendly piece through an enemy piece.

A *relative skewer* is when a piece other than the king is first in the line of attack.

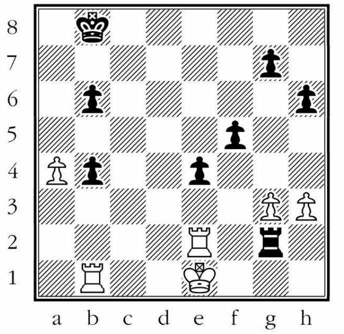
The attacked piece is not required to move, but usually does because it has a higher value than the piece it is shielding.


Position after 21.Bb5
Black to move

White's bishop skewers Black's queen to the less valuable rook.
After the queen moves, White can win *the exchange* (a rook for a minor piece) by playing **22.Bxe8**.

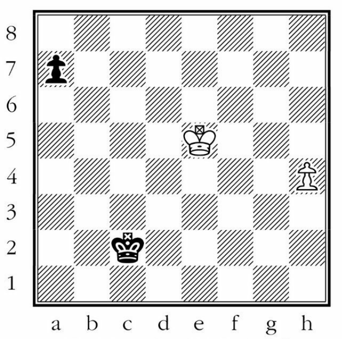
An *absolute skewer* is when the king is first in the line of attack.

If the king moves (sometimes a piece can interpose and block the skewer or the king can capture the skewering piece), the less valuable piece behind him is vulnerable to capture.


Position after 42.Rxe2 (R)
Black to move

Black can play **42…Rg1+**, skewering the king and rook on b1.
After **43.Kf2** (or 43.Kd2), Black can play **43…Rxb1** winning back the rook emerging with a three pawn advantage in material.

When a pawn promotes to a queen, rook, or bishop, the newly promoted piece has the ability to skewer.

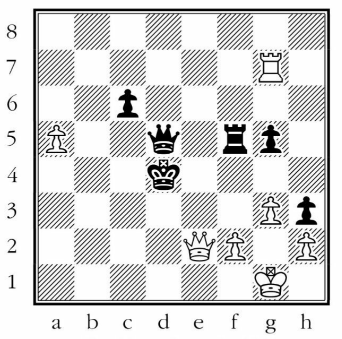


Position after 52.Kxe5 (N)
Black to move

Black plays **52…a5** as the pawns race to promote.
53.h5 a4 54.h6 a3 55.h7 a2 56.h8=Q and White is the first to promote.
56…a1=Q+ Skewering the king and queen.
After White moves his king, Black wins the queen with **57…Qxh8**.

In order to avoid unexpected surprises, it is important to take the time to see if any pieces are lined up for potential pins or skewers at the end of the variations you are considering.

Pins and skewers, as well as other tactics we will soon discuss, can be used in combination to win material.

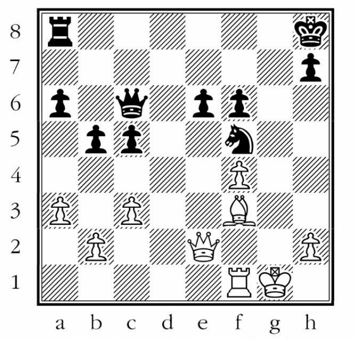


Position after 71…Kd4
White to move

Notice that Black's king and queen are lined up on the d-file.
White could play 72.Qd2+, skewering them, but after the king moves, Black's queen is protected.

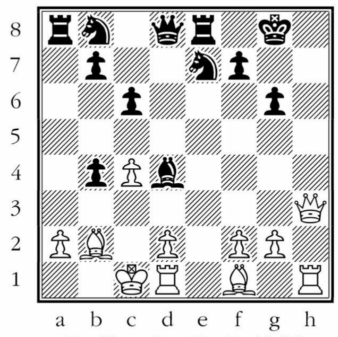
To win the queen for a rook, White first plays **72.Rd7!** pinning the queen to the king.
After **72…Qxd7**, White can play **73.Qd2+** (or 73.Qd1+) and then capture the queen with **74.Qxd7** after Black's king moves.

To gain time or a tempo to escape a skewer, one of the pieces involved in the skewer might be able to move and make a bigger threat against one of the opponent's pieces or check the king.



Position after 27.Bxf3 (p)
Black to move

White's bishop skewers Black's queen to his rook.
Black can escape the bishop skewer by playing **27…Rg8+**.
After White moves out of check, Black's queen can move off the h1-a8 diagonal to avoid being captured by White's bishop.



Position after 16…Bxd4 (N)
White to move

White attacks the h8 square three times: with the queen, the rook on h1 through the queen, and the bishop on b2 which X-rays h8 through Black's bishop.
White wins by playing **17.Qh8+! Bxh8 18.Rxh8 mate**.

Tips on Skewers

- Like pins, look for ways to skewer your opponent's pieces while avoiding your opponent's attempts to skewer you.

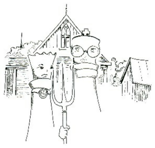
- Skewers are not as common as pins, but can be more effective than pins because skewers directly attack the more valuable piece.

- Skewers tend to occur more often in the endgame because there are more open lines in this phase of the game. Kings are frequently out in the open and subject to skewers at this time.

- In the opening and middlegame, players lead with pawns and minor pieces, leaving the more valuable pieces in the rear. This results in more pins than skewers earlier in the game.

- Like pins, the clue to finding skewers is being on the lookout for pieces lined up on the same file, rank, or diagonal. When this occurs, take time to imagine which piece can skewer them.

Forks



Along with pins, double attacks are one of the most frequently occurring tactical motifs.

A double attack is when a piece moves, making two separate threats simultaneously.

The most common type of double attack is a fork.

Forks occur when a piece or pawn moves and attacks two or more enemy pieces or pawns at the same time.

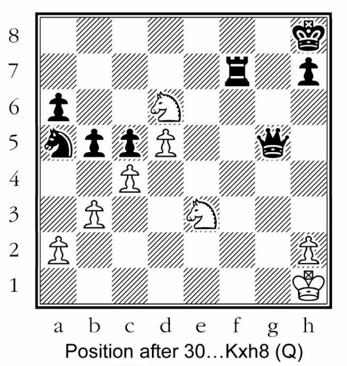
The attacker is hoping to gain material since he may have the opportunity to capture one of the pieces on the next move.

The defender usually saves the more valuable unit.

All pieces as well as pawns can fork the opponent's pieces.

Forking a king and queen is called a *royal fork*.

Knights are the trickiest piece and famous for their forking ability; the most common type of fork is a knight fork.



Position after 30…Kxh8 (Q)
White to move

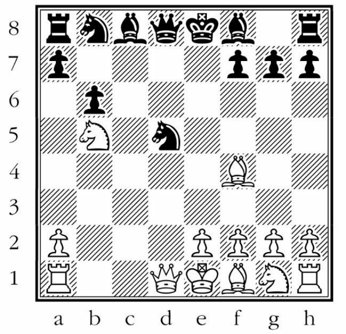
Blacks last move was 30…Kxh8, capturing White's queen, which White offered to set up the fork.

White can now play **31.Nxf7+** capturing the rook and royal forking Black's king and queen.

After Black's king moves, White can play **32.Nxg5** capturing the queen.

Forking the king, queen, and another piece is called a *family fork*.

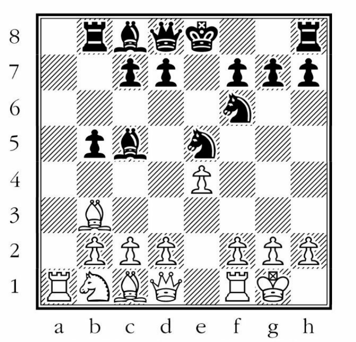
When Black's king doesn't castle early and the a8 rook hasn't moved, a common knight forking square for White is c7. When White doesn't castle early and his rook is still on a1, c2 is a similar forking square for one of Black's knights.



Position after 9…Nxd5 (N)
White to move

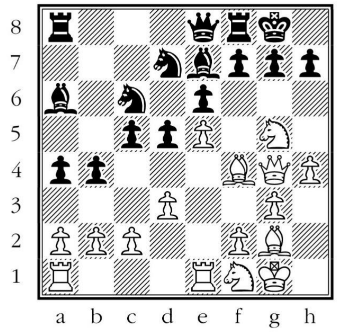
White can play **10.Qxd5!** capturing Black's knight that protects the c7 square.
After Black captures White's queen with **10…Qxd5**, White can play **11.Nc7+** with a family fork of Black's king, queen, and rook on a8.
After Black moves his king, White can capture his queen with **12.Nxd5**.

Pawns, as long as they are not on the a- or h- file (rook pawns), can also fork.



Position after 9…Nxe5 (N)
White to move

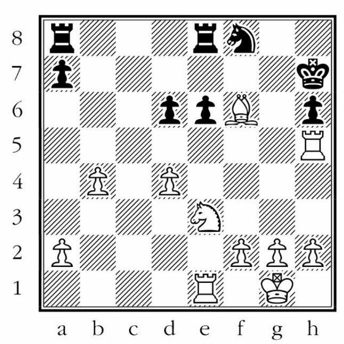
White can regain his piece by forking Black’s bishop and knight with a pawn by playing **10.d4**.
Note that White’s queen protects the pawn from the attack by Black’s bishop.



Position after 14…a4
White to move

White sets up a potential fork and attacks the rook on f8 by playing **15.Nxe6!**
If Black captures the knight with **15…fxe6**, White forks Black’s king, both knights, bishop, and d5 pawn with **16.Qxe6+**.
Black’s c6 knight and d5 pawn are unprotected and vulnerable to capture.
White will come out ahead in material.

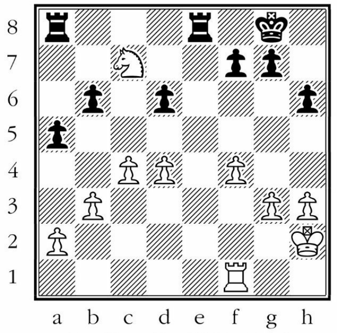
Although it is relatively rare, kings can also fork two or more pieces or pawns.



Position after 32.Rxh5 (Q)
Black to move

Black's best move is **32…Kg6** forking the bishop and rook.
33.Rh3 White saves the more valuable rook.
33…Kxf6 isn't enough to save Black's position because after
34.Rxh6+ White is ahead by three pawns.
Although Black ends up behind in material, playing the
forking move is still the best move in the diagramed position.

To gain time to get out of a fork, one of the pieces involved in the fork could move, making a bigger threat against one of the opponent's pieces or checking the king.



Position after 33.Nxc7 (p)
Black to move

White's knight forks Black's rooks.

Black escapes the fork by playing **33…Re2+**.
After **34.Kg1**, Black has time to save his rook on a8.

Tips on Forks

- Forks don’t always win material since the value of the forking piece, the forked pieces, and number of attackers and defenders play a role in whether a material gain is possible.

- The best way to find forks is to always be observant and train your mind to look for positions where forks occur.

- If pieces are lined up on a diagonal, look for an enemy bishop or queen that can fork them. If they are on the same file or rank, look for a rook or queen that can deliver a fork. Queens can also fork one piece on a diagonal and another on a rank or file.

- Two pieces on the same rank separated by a square are vulnerable to pawn or knight forks. Since knights are the trickiest moving and a common forking piece, be on the lookout for other possible knight fork patterns as well.

- The king can sometimes fork pieces that are next to each other or separated by a square.

- Like pins and skewers, to save yourself from walking into a fork during or at the end of a combination, look at the future position in your mind and carefully check if any of your pieces are positioned where your opponent can fork them.

Discoveries

A discovery is a type of double attack where the moving piece can attack an opponent's piece or a critical square, while uncovering a threat from a long-range piece behind it on a file, rank, or diagonal.

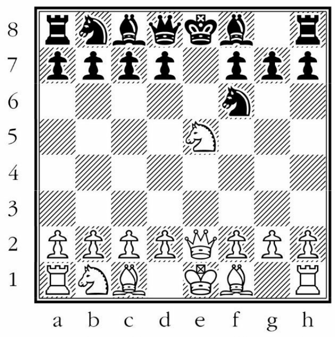
It is analogous to playing peek-a-boo. When you move your hands from in front of your eyes, you see the other person.

Discoveries typically involve two of the attacker's pieces and one of the defender's pieces positioned on the same line of attack.

The types of discoveries are discovered check, discovered attack, double check, and double attack.

Discovered check occurs when a player moves a piece that shields the opposing king from check by one of the long-range pieces.

In other words, the moving piece reveals or uncovers a hidden piece behind it that attacks the enemy king.



Position after 4…Nf6 (from e4)
White to move

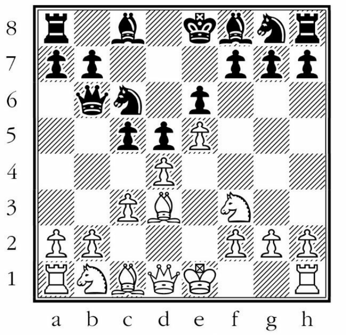
White's knight shields Black's king from a check from the White queen.

White can play **5.Nc6+**.

Black has no legal king moves and must interpose a piece to block the check.

White's knight can capture Black's queen the next move on either d8 or e7, depending on Black's response.

A discovered attack is the same concept as a discovered check, except the piece (or square) attacked by the shielded piece is not the king.



Position after 6.Bd3
Black to move

White's pawn on d4 is attacked three times, defended twice by the pawn and knight.

On the surface, it looks like Black can win the pawn, but it is also indirectly defended by White's queen, through the bishop.

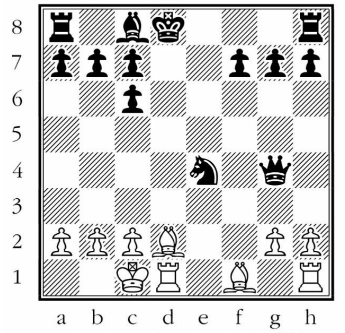
Black loses material after **6…cxd4 7.cxd4 Nxd4 8.Nxd4 Qxd4 9.Bb5+** because of the discovered attack on Black's queen.

After Black's king escapes the check, White can capture Black's queen with his queen.

The most powerful type of discovery is a double check, which occurs when the moving piece and the piece behind it both check the king at the same time.

Unlike a regular check where the checking piece may be captured or a piece may interpose, in the case of double check, the king is forced to move, thus limiting the defender’s possible responses.

The notation symbol designated for a double check is ++.



Position after 14…Kxd8 (Q)
White to move

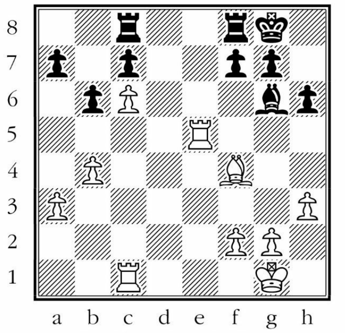
White sacrificed the queen on d8 to line up Black’s king on the d-file with his rook.

White can play **15.Bg5++** attacking Black’s king with both his bishop and rook simultaneously.

To get out of check, Black must play **15…Ke8**.

White can then play **16.Rd8 mate**.

A double attack on a piece or a pawn is the same concept as a double check, except that the piece attacked twice is not the king and thus isn’t forced to move.



Position after 30…Bg6
White to move

White can play **31.Re7** moving his rook to the 7th rank with a double attack on Black’s c7 pawn.

Since Black can’t defend the pawn a second time, White can win it on the next move resulting in a dangerous passed pawn on c6.

We will discuss pawn structure in Part 3.

Tips on Discoveries

- When calculating a combination, be observant at each step along the way to notice if any pieces are lined up for discoveries in the same manner you look for pins and skewers.
- Discoveries are rarer than pins, skewers, and forks.
- The threat of a discovery can be extremely dangerous and may suddenly win the game.

Removing the Guard

QUEEN
MONA LISA

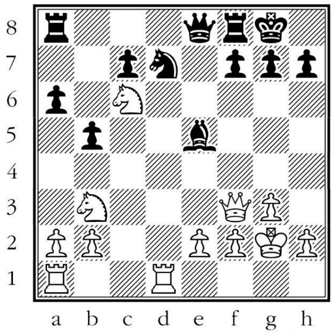
Counting how many times pieces (and squares) are attacked and how many times they are defended is critical to mastering chess.

Removing the guard or defender (sometimes referred to as undermining) is a tactic in which a defensive piece is captured or chased away, leaving another piece or key square undefended or under-defended.

If the guard is captured, the opponent has to choose between recapturing the guard's attacker or saving the undefended piece.

The guard may be protecting a square where other tactics can occur.

Similar chess terms to removing the guard are the *overworked piece* and *deflection*.



Position after 21…Bxe5 (p)
White to move

Black's bishop is attacked once, by the knight, and defended twice, by his knight and queen.

White removes the knight protecting the bishop by playing **22.Rxd7!**

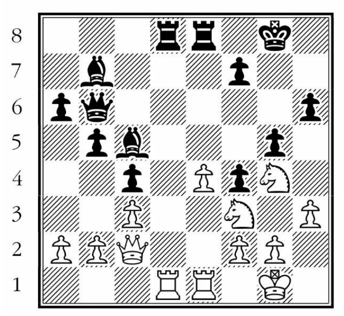
After **22…Qxd7** the queen no longer protects the bishop.

White can now play **23.Nxe5**.

White won a knight and bishop for a rook.

Overworking (or overloading) is exploiting an enemy piece that must protect two or more pieces or squares at the same time.

The attacker’s goal is to force the overworked piece to recapture one of the pieces it protects, thereby leaving another piece or square undefended.



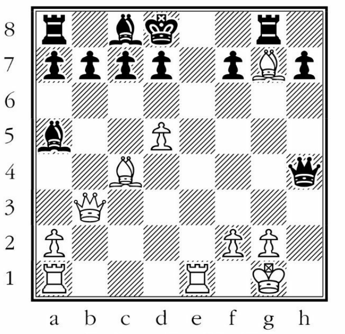
Position after 26.Ng4
Black to move

White’s e4 pawn is attacked twice and defended twice.
26…Rxd1 One of the defenders of White’s pawn on e4, the rook or queen, must recapture the rook, leaving the pawn with only one defender.
White played **27.Rxd1** and Black responded **27…Bxe4** winning the pawn.

Deflection is a chess tactic where a piece is deflected away from defending another piece, a line of attack, or a critical square.

Deflections typically occur as part of a combination where the deflected piece is critical to the defense.

If the deflected piece happens to be an overworked piece then the opponent's defense could instantly crumble, possibly winning the game immediately for the attacker.

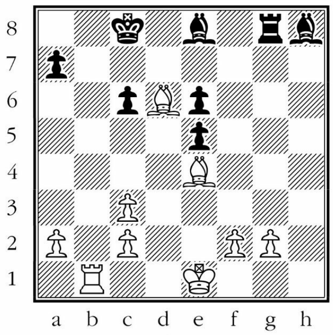


Position after 16…Kd8
White to move

If not for Black’s queen defending f6, 17.Bf6 would be checkmate.

White can play **17.Qg3** attacking the queen in an attempt to chase (deflect) her away from protecting the critical f6 square.

17.Qb2 threatening 18.Bf6+ is also winning for White.



Position after 23…Be8
White to move

White can play **24.Bxc6!** threatening 25.Rb8 mate.

24…Bxc6 is forced to prevent the mate threat by opening up the d7 square for the king.

With the bishop no longer on the first rank, White can skewer Black’s king and rook by playing **25.Rb8+ Kd7 26.Rxg8** leaving White ahead in material.

Tips on Removing the Guard

- The only real defense for overloading is to not allow a piece to become overloaded.

- Overprotection is a preventative measure where multiple pieces defend the same point, making it more difficult to exploit since more pieces need to be chased away to eliminate the last protector. Another chess term for this is *prophylaxis*, meaning “preventive care”.

- A possible response when a defending piece is vulnerable to an overload is to trade or move the piece it is protecting before the defender is captured.

- Always be on the lookout for overworked pieces as you are counting how many times pieces are attacked and defended, and pay special attention if one of the pieces has more than one defensive responsibility.

Trapped Pieces

CELL BLOCK f7
ALCATRAZ
F.B.P.

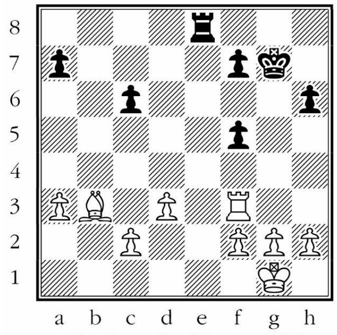
A piece surrounded by enemy or friendly pieces is in danger of being trapped.

The best piece to trap is the king, since delivering checkmate is the object of the game.

A back rank mate is the most common type of checkmate and occurs when a rook or queen invades the opponent's position to attack the king on his back rank where he cannot escape because he is typically blocked by his own pieces (usually pawns) on his second rank.

One way to avoid getting back rank mated on the kingside is to move a pawn to h3 or g3 (for White) or h6 or g6 (for Black) to create a flight square or *luft* (a German word meaning air, or room to breathe) for the king.

Unless you have a specific reason to move a pawn in front of your castled king, try to avoid it because it costs you a tempo and can weaken your king position in the future. You can't undo a pawn move.



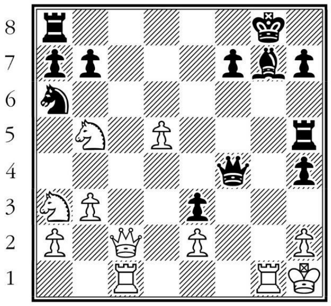
Position after 31...Rxe8 (R)
White to move

Here is a memorable back rank mate position where I was playing White, in my second chess tournament just after my tenth birthday.

After trading a set of rooks on e8, I was focused on winning Black’s f5 pawn.

Failing to ask what my opponent was threatening after recapturing my rook on e8, I quickly played **32.Rxf5??**

I was unpleasantly surprised when she played **32…Re1 mate**.



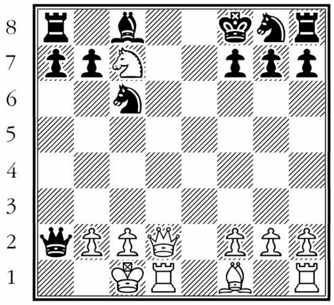
Position after 24…Qxf4 (p)
White to move

Because he is pinned to the Black king on the g-file, Black’s bishop can’t interpose on f8 to block the back rank mate threat.

White wins by playing **25.Qc8+ Rxc8 26.Rxc8 mate**.

When you notice the potential to deliver a back rank mate, look for ways to chase away your opponent’s pieces that defend key invasion squares.

You should also look for ways to attack or block the flight squares of your opponent’s king.



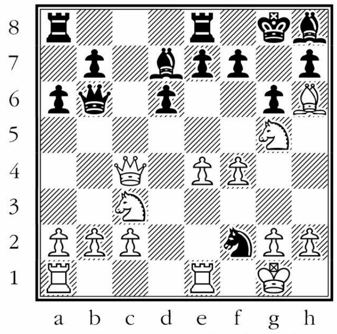
Position after 14…Kf8
White to move

Both players have potential back rank mate threats.
If it were Black to move, he could play 15…Qa1 mate.
Black's king escapes the back rank if White plays 15.Qd8+ Nxd8 16.Rxd8+ Ke7.
White's best move is **15.Qd6+**, forcing one of Black's knights to occupy the e7 square.
Black chooses **15…Nge7** because of 15…Nce7 16.Qd8 mate.
White then traps Black's king on the back rank with **16.Qd8+ Nxd8 17.Rxd8 mate.**

Another checkmate pattern all chess players should learn is the smothered mate.

This occurs when the king is attacked by a knight and is unable to move because he is surrounded or smothered by his own pieces and pawns, often in the corner of the board.

The typical sequence of moves leading to a smothered mate is a knight move that delivers a double check by the knight and a queen that was shielded by the knight on a diagonal, followed by a queen sacrifice that forces the defender's rook to capture her on the square next to the king. The knight then jumps in to deliver mate.



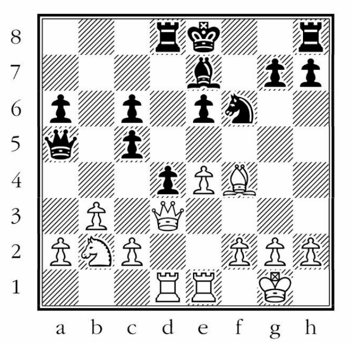
Position after 18.Kg1 (from h1)
Black to move

Black starts the smothered mate sequence by playing **18…Nh3++**.
19.Kh1. 19.Kf1 loses to 19…Qf2 mate.
Black sacrifices his queen by playing **19…Qg1+**, forcing **20.Rxg1**.

Black wins the game by playing **20…Nf2 mate**.

Because she is the most powerful piece, the queen is the toughest piece to trap.

A common way a queen gets trapped is when she comes out early in the game and tries to grab a pawn in the enemy camp and cannot retreat to safety.

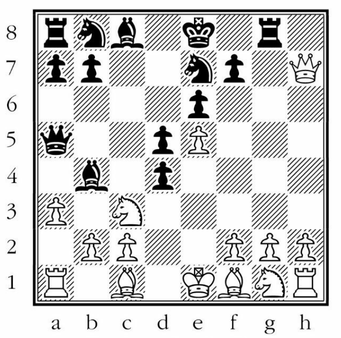


Position after 18.Nb2 (from a4)
Black to move

White offers Black the a2 pawn.
Should Black capture it with his queen?
Whenever your opponent offers you something, you should take your time and ask yourself if it is a trap before taking it.
18...Qxa2? is a mistake because **19.Nc4** not only saves the knight, but also takes away the queen's a3 and a5 retreat squares.
Black cannot save the queen from the threat of **20.Ra1** on the next move.

Rooks normally don't get trapped on the enemy's side of the board since they usually invade in the endgame when there are few pieces remaining on the board.

In the opening, rooks can be temporarily trapped when the minor pieces around them are slow to develop. They can also get trapped, but usually not captured, in the corner when the player doesn't castle and his king has to flee from the center along the back rank.

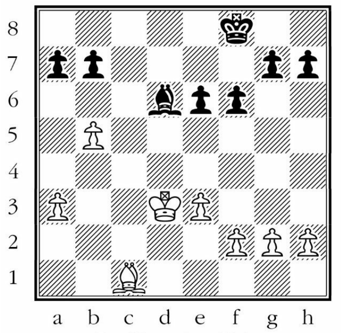


Position after 8…Qa5
White to move

White's knight on c3 is pinned to his king and his a3 pawn is pinned to the rook.
White breaks the pin on the a-file, and threatens to capture Black's bishop with his pawn by playing **9.Rb1**.
Black wins material with **9…dxc3** since **10.axb4** loses to **10…Qa2**, trapping the rook.

Bishops can be trapped, but not captured, in the opening when friendly pawns block their available diagonals.

Bishops can also get trapped when they capture a pawn on the opponent's side of the board and a neighboring pawn blocks its retreat.



Position after 29.b5
Black to move

Black sees the unprotected pawn on h2 and grabs it by playing **29…Bxh2?**
White traps the bishop with **30.g3** and runs over to capture it with his king before Black can free it after **30…h5 31.Ke2 h4**

32.Kf3 Ke7 33.Kg2 hxg3 34.fxg3.

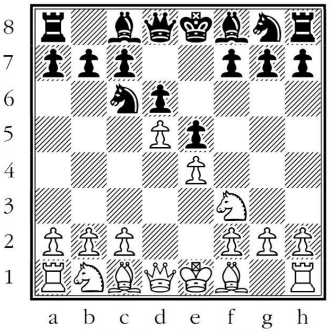
The bishop is trapped.

Black at least gets a pawn for the bishop by playing **34…Bxg3**.

After **35.Kxg3**, White is ahead a bishop to two pawns with a winning endgame.

Knights are vulnerable to being trapped on the edge of the board or in the corner because they are short-range pieces with a limited number of possible moves.

This is another reason to keep knights centralized.



Position after 4.d5
Black to move

4…Na5? moving the knight to the edge of the board is a mistake.

White can attack the knight by playing **5.b4**.

The knight is trapped because he can't safely retreat to c6 and White's bishop on f1 protects c4.

Tips on Trapped Pieces

- Pay careful attention to back rank mates, as they are a common checkmate pattern in chess. You will win and lose many games due to back rank checkmates.

- Always keep an eye open for when a piece has limited mobility or a shortage of possible safe moves. All pieces like freedom with plenty of options; give your pieces lot of choices of squares to move to.

- There is danger in your opponent’s territory; be careful moving your pieces there since they are often outnumbered and may get trapped.

Forcing Moves

Fischer-Ice (land)

In a typical middlegame position, each player normally has around 25-35 legal moves to choose from, though most of those will not be practical.

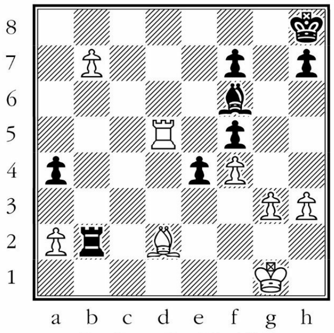
The attacking player naturally wants to limit the number of possible moves his opponent has at his disposal and force him to respond to his threats, so he can keep the initiative and prevent the opponent from regrouping and staging a counterattack.

A forcing move is one which makes a threat that requires the opponent to reply in a certain way, limiting the number of possible responses.

Types of forcing moves are checks, captures, or some other move that creates a threat which must be immediately dealt with, like attacking a piece or threatening checkmate.

Forcing the opponent to bring a defender to protect a pinned piece, to recapture a piece, or to play some other defensive move, can be quite effective, but no move is more forcing than a check.

A check is the best type of forcing move because it requires the opponent to get out of check, no matter what else he intended to do with his turn.



Position after 33…Rb2
White to move

White would like to promote his b7 pawn, but cannot promote it safely because the b8 square isn't protected. Note that Black's king, bishop, and rook are all on the a1-h8 diagonal; this is a great example of looking for pieces that are lined up, potentially making them vulnerable to a fork, pin or skewer.

White protects b8 and forces Black's bishop off the diagonal by playing **34.Rd8+!**

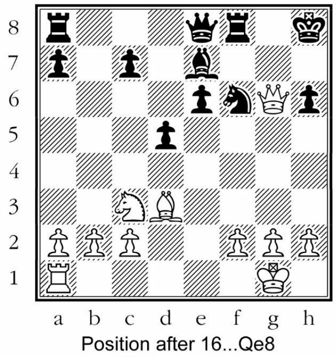
If Black doesn't capture the bishop with **34…Bxd8**, and plays 34…Kg7, White will promote the pawn to a queen with 35.b8=Q.

White can fork Black's king and rook with **35.Bc3+** and after **35…Kg8**, capture the rook with **36.Bxb2**.

White will be able to safely promote the pawn soon after **36…Bc7 37.Be5**.

Often a series of forcing checks leads to checkmate or a perpetual check/threefold repetition draw.

In both cases, the attacker keeps the initiative, not allowing the defender time to create threats of his own.


Position after 16...Qe8
White to move

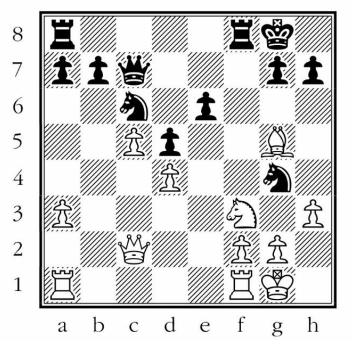
Black is ahead a rook to a pawn in material.

White forces a threefold repetition draw by playing

17.Qxh6+ Kg8 17…Nh7 18.Qxh7 mate.

18.Qg5+ Kh8 18…Kf7 19.Qg6 mate.

19.Qh6+ Kg8 20.Qg5+ Kh8 21.Qh6+ and the position has occurred three times.

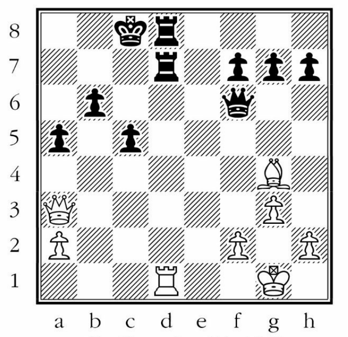


Position after 21.h3
Black to move

White's knight is an overworked piece defending the d4 pawn and the potential …Qh2 mate threat.

Black plays **21…Nxd4!** forking White's queen and knight. Since he can't create any serious threats and must respond to the threat against his queen, White plays **22.Qd3** to protect the knight a second time.

Black plays **22…Nxf3+** forcing White to deal with the check. **23.gxf3** (or 23.Kh1) **23…Qh2 mate**.



Position after 27…Rd8
White to move

White plays **28.Qa4** forcing Black to defend the pinned rook on d7 a third time with **28…Qe7**.

Black's queen no longer protects the c6 invasion square.

White wins the game with **29.Qc6+** which forces **29…Kb8**, leaving White with a pleasant choice of either 30.Qxb6+ or capturing the rook on d7.

Tips on Forcing Moves

- Forcing moves play a big role in tactics and combinations because they limit the opponent’s choice of responses.

- When attacking the king, all checks (especially double checks), captures, and sacrifices are forcing candidate moves. Candidate moves are reasonable moves that make sense without calculation.

- Look at forcing moves first when you start to analyze a position. This will help cut down on calculation time if the forcing combination or sequence of moves wins the game immediately.

- When you have a superior position, forcing lines can be used to simplify into technically winning positions.

- Because the opponent has a limited number of ways to respond, a series of checking moves can be calculated deeper than a normal move sequence.

Sacrifices

A sacrifice (commonly called a sac in chess terms) is a move that voluntarily gives up a piece or pawn with the objective of gaining tactical or positional compensation that justifies the loss in material.

Often the player sacrificing material soon regains the material or forces checkmate.

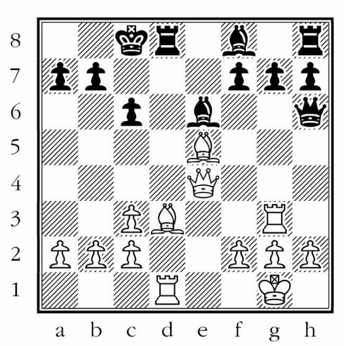
Trading a piece of higher value for an opponent's piece of lower value is also considered a sacrifice. An example of this is the *exchange sacrifice* where a rook is given up for a minor piece.

The king is the only piece that cannot be sacrificed.

Sacrificing pieces is one of the most direct and beautiful ways to attack the enemy king and often comes as an unpleasant surprise to the opponent. The shock of an unexpected sacrifice not only causes psychological distress, but the defender must spend precious time calculating whether the sacrifice is sound (justified and correct) and whether or not to accept it. Often the defender is better off declining the sacrifice.

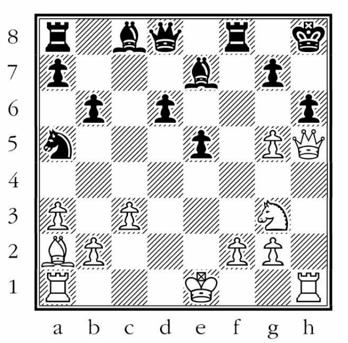
Giving up the queen is the ultimate sacrifice. Queen sacrifices occur in some of the most famous and brilliant games ever played and usually occur at the climax of an attack on the king. Successful queen sacrifices often lead to a quick forced checkmate. Do not try this unless you have calculated out the full move sequence and are totally sure it will work!

Keep in mind that most sacrifices don’t work. You will get the impression that most sacrifices do work by reading chess books because successful sacrifices are usually the only ones shown.



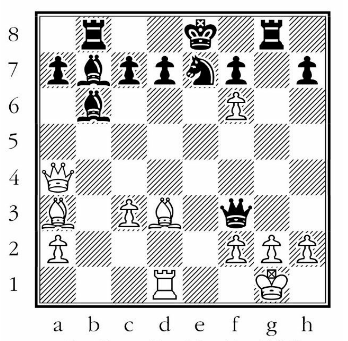
Position after 19...0-0-0
White to move

White sacrifices his queen and forces mate by playing **20.Qxc6+! bxc6 21.Ba6 mate**.



Position after 18…h6
White to move

White has pressure on the h-file and wins by sacrificing his queen with **19.Qxh6+! gxh6 20.Rxh6+ Kg7 21.Nh5 mate**.



Position after 20…Nxe7 (R)
White to move

White sacrifices his queen to line up Black’s king on the d-file for a double check followed by another forcing check that leads to mate with **21.Qxd7+!**

21…Kxd7 22.Bf5++ Ke8 22…Kc6 23.Bd7 mate.

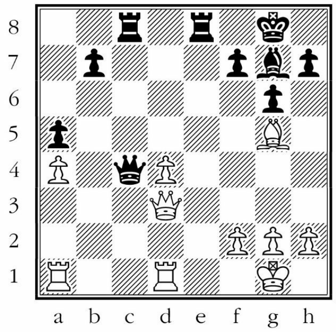
23.Bd7+ Kf8 23…Kd8 24.Bxe7 mate or 24.fxe7 mate.

24.Bxe7 mate.

As the value of the sacrificed piece decreases, so does the size of the commitment needed to justify the loss of material. In other words, you don't need to get as much in return when sacrificing a pawn as compared to sacrificing a queen.

Sacrificing a rook or one of the minor pieces is more than enough material to lose the game if the sacrifice is not sound.

Carefully calculate all the variations before making any piece sacrifice to make sure you can justify the loss of material.



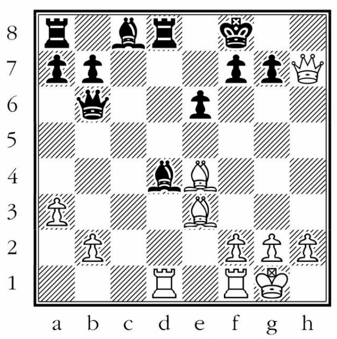
Position after 24.exd4 (p)
Black to move

White's queen is attacked once and only defended by the rook.

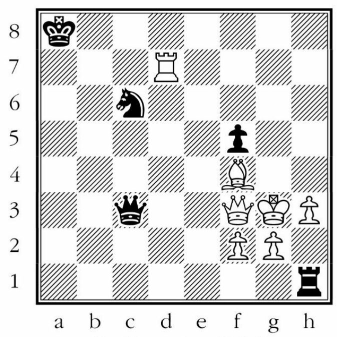
Black wins the queen by sacrificing his rook on the 8th rank, deflecting White's rook from protecting her by playing **24…Re1+**.

25.Rxe1 Qxd3 wins the queen.

A common type of sacrifice used in an attack on the king is the exchange sacrifice, where a rook is sacrificed for a bishop or knight, usually one that is guarding the king.


Position after 21…Kf8
White to move

White sacrifices the exchange by playing **22.Rxd4!**
After **22…Rxd4 23.Qh8+ Ke7 24.Qxg7** Black's rook on d4 is pinned to the queen and attacked twice, defended once. White will win material.


Position after 42.Qf3
Black to move

Black is behind in material and is losing, but he forces a stalemate by first sacrificing his queen with **42…Qg7+!** White has to accept the sacrifice with **43.Rxg7** or lose his rook.
Now Black sacrifices his rook by playing **43…Rxh3+!** White has to capture the rook by playing **44.Kxh3** (or 44.gxh3) **stalemate!**
Draws are better than losing.

Tips on Sacrifices

- Possible reasons to sacrifice a piece or pawn are to clear the way for mating attacks on the king, open up lines for attack, force the opponent's pieces to a square where they are vulnerable to a tactic like a pin or fork, gain greater mobility for the pieces, regain material at the end of a combination, clear a path for a passed pawn to promote, or weaken the opponent's pawn structure.

- You need to think long and hard before making a queen sacrifice to make sure you calculate all the variations accurately. Overlooking a move can be the difference between a win and a loss because giving up your queen can leave you way behind in material with a losing position.

- If you don't understand why your opponent sacrificed a piece, take it.

- Of all the pieces that can be sacrificed, a pawn sacrifice has the least commitment since it has the lowest value.

- A master will sometimes sacrifice a pawn for the initiative to speed up his attack. This often occurs in the opening, when the opponent's king is still in the center, or when the players castle on opposite sides in order to open files for the rooks to attack the opponent's king.

- A *gambit* is when a player typically sacrifices a pawn in the opening with the hope of gaining some type of advantage. A pawn in the opening is generally worth between two and three moves.

- Sacrificing a pawn to gain the initiative may be justified if you can tie down your opponent's pieces and create strong threats. In this case, it is important that you keep the initiative and continue attacking.

Combinations

Sure
Lock
Safe
Co.

Combinations consist of individual tactical motifs made in a specific sequence which can be simple or so complex they challenge the world's best players.

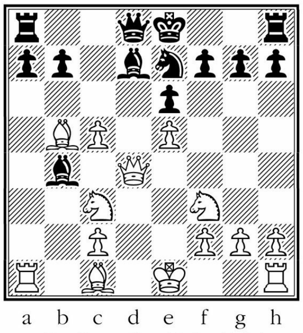
Combinations are often a series of forcing moves where the moves alternate between a threat and a response to the threat.

Goals of a successful combination may be checkmating the king, gaining a material advantage, achieving a better pawn structure, activating one's pieces, escaping from a difficult position, or simplifying to a winning endgame.

Repetition and pattern recognition are important in mastering combinations as this sharpens your mind to find tactical patterns.

Move order in a combination is important. If a combination doesn't work in the move order you are considering, try reversing the moves and play the second move first and the first move you are considering second. This move reversal sometimes makes the combination work.

During a capture sequence, you should generally capture with the least valuable piece first and most valuable piece last since this will likely minimize your material losses during the combination and thereby maximize your material gain at the end of the combination.



Position after 12.Qxd4 (p)
Black to move

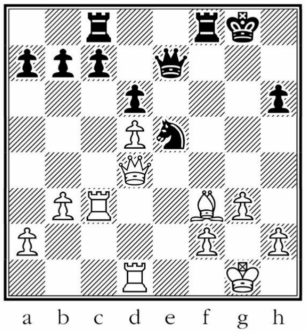
White threatens Black's dark-squared bishop with his queen. White's bishop on b5 is attacked by Black's bishop on d7 and isn't protected by the c3 knight because the knight is pinned to the king.

After 12…Bxb5, White can play 13.Qxb4 and retain a piece advantage.

Black regains a piece with a two-move combination by playing **12…Bxc3+**.

White must recapture with **13.Qxc3**.

Black can now win White's bishop on b5 with **13…Bxb5**. Material is now even, but White has weak doubled isolated pawns on the c-file, which we will discuss in Part 3.

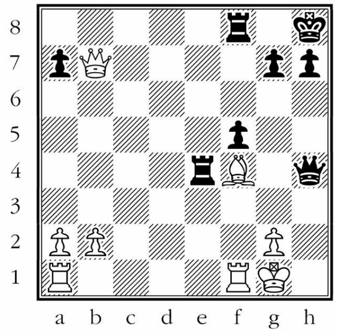


Position after 23.Bxf3 (p)
Black to move

White's bishop is attacked twice and defended once.

Blacks doesn't win material if he plays 23…Nxf3+ 24.Rxf3 Rxf3 because of 25.Qg4+ forking Black's king and both rooks.

Reversing the move order and capturing with the more valuable rook first by playing **23…Rxf3!** is the correct move because **24.Rxf3 Nxf3+** forks White's king and queen.


Position after 25…Re4
White to move

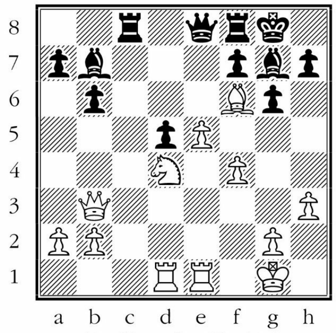
White finds a winning combination that takes advantage of Black's f8 rook's responsibility to defend against a potential back rank mate.

White first opens the f-file for his rook by sacrificing his queen with **26.Qxe4!**

Black plays **26…fxe4** because he must capture the queen or be hopelessly behind in material.

White makes a double attack with **27.Bg5!**, threatening both the queen and a back rank mate.

Black is lost; he doesn't have any queen moves that protect the rook and **27…Rxf1+ 28.Rxf1** renews the 29.Rf8 mate threat. Black's queen can't defend the back rank because she is blocked by White's bishop.


Position after 23…Rc8
White to move

White is invading the dark squares in front of Black's king.

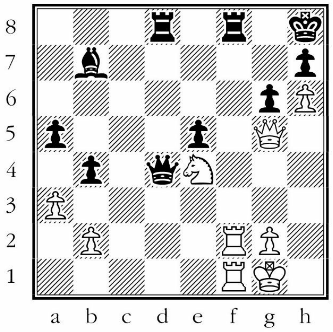
White wins with **24.Nf5!** attacking Black's bishop a second time.

If Black retreats his bishop with 24…Bh8, then White can play 25.Nh6 mate.

Capturing with 24…Bxf6 leads to 25.exf6 with a discovered attack on Black's queen and the threat of 26.Ne7+ forking the king and rook.

If Black plays 24… gxf5, White can play 25.Qg3 pinning the bishop to the king and threatening the unstoppable 26.Qxg7 mate.

White wins in all possible variations.



Position after 37...Qd4
White to move

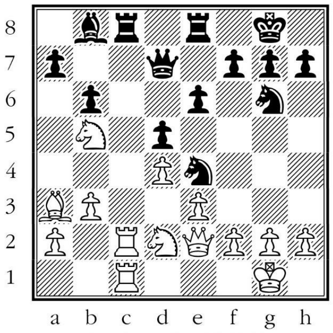
Black is attacking White's undefended knight twice and his queen is pinning White's f2 rook to his king.

White finds a combination that wins the game by forking Black's king and queen with **38.Qxe5+!**

If Black plays 38...Qxe5 the pin is broken and White can play 39.Rxf8+ Rxf8 40.Rxf8 mate.

Also losing is 38…Kg8 39.Qxd4 because of 39…Rxd4 40.Rxf8 mate.

38.Qe7, threatening 39.Qg7 mate, is also winning for White. Often a position has more than one winning move.



Position after 22.Nd2
Black to move

The exact move order is important in a successful combination that contains a series of captures.

Black plays **22...Rxc2!** to begin the capturing sequence in the combination.

White is forced to recapture the rook by playing **23.Rxc2**.

Now Black captures the d2 knight with **23…Nxd2**.

White must recapture the knight.

White plays **24.Rxd2** because 24.Qxd2 allows Black's queen to capture the knight on b5 that White's queen is defending.

Black now forces White's knight to retreat to its only available safe square with **24…a6**.

25.Nc3 Black forced White's pieces to squares that set up a fork of his knight and pawn on h2 with checkmate threats and now plays **25…Qc7**.

Tips on Combinations

- Noticing how pieces are lined up is essential to tactics and calculating combinations. When you stop and think about it, this should come naturally. In real life, pretty much everything you do is lining something up…like lining up your foot to put on a sock or lining up your body to walk through a door to enter a room.

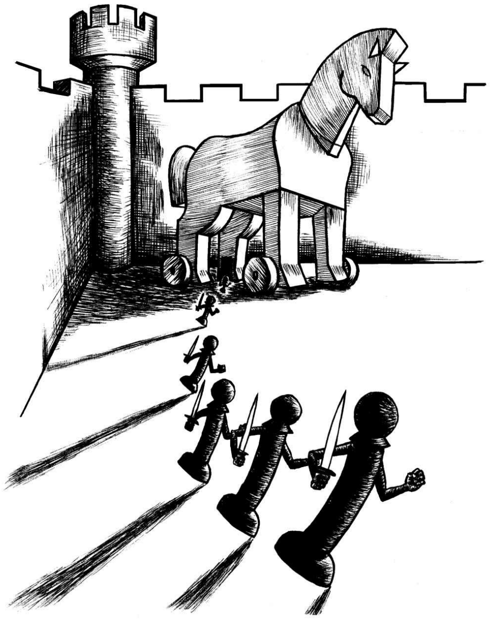
- You may analyze a variation where you are thinking, "I take him. Then he takes me. And then I take him. And I am ahead!" You are happy and think you are winning and often play out the combination only to find your opponent pins you (or beats you with some other tactic) at the end of the combination to win the game. The best way to save yourself from this type of oversight is to carefully examine the positions during and at the end of the combination in your mind and mentally check to see if any pieces are lined up for a future tactic.

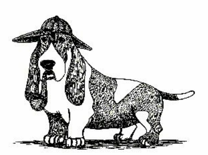
- The move order, or the sequence in which the moves are played or captures are made in a combination, is important and must be calculated precisely.

- Always take time to check and see what your opponent is threatening.

- If one of your pieces is attacked, leaving it unprotected and attacking an opponent's piece can be dangerous if the opponent's piece can move to a safe square and also gain a tempo by attacking one of your pieces or putting you in check.

Part 3 - STRATEGY





Chess strategy is the plan you develop to achieve your goals.

The first step in developing a good plan is to understand how to position your pieces. Each piece has different things it likes and dislikes. Piece placement preferences may change for each piece as the game progresses through its different phases.

A basic strategy for any position is to improve a piece’s placement by moving it to a better square. For each piece you should always be thinking about where the best square for it will be, how long will it take to get there, and can your opponent stop you.

Deciding when to trade or exchange pieces is important throughout the game.

To evaluate a position correctly, it is important to take into account the elements and types of advantages in the position: king safety, material, piece activity, space, and pawn structure.

There are different basic strategies to learn and apply in the opening, middlegame, and endgame.

Most amateur chess players spend too much time looking at immediate moves (and tactics) and don’t spend enough time thinking about their overall strategy.

Before developing a strategy, you need to be observant and pick up clues in the position and look at the big picture. Keep an open mind to new discoveries.

Look at the entire board, not just part of it, and don’t automatically just react to what your opponent is doing.

Always have a purpose for your moves, don’t waste moves or tempi, and think several moves ahead.

A few other general strategies are to use all your pieces, don’t give your pieces away, control the center, and keep your king protected.

Keep in mind that there isn’t always a “best” move. Some moves may be about the same and some may be much better than others.

Don’t follow general chess principles blindly. You always have to evaluate each position carefully and determine if the general principle holds or if an exception to the rule exists.

How to Think

Organizing your thoughts and knowing what you should be thinking about on your move and your opponent's move is important to improving your game.

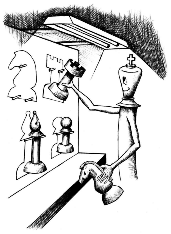
When it is your turn to move you should be looking at the details in the position. Here is checklist to follow:

1. In tournament play, write down your opponent's move.
2. Ask, "What is my opponent threatening?" Pretend you are your opponent with a free move and try to figure out what you would do if you were him. Remember he can threaten more than one thing.
3. Determine your candidate moves. Candidate moves are moves which upon initial observation of the position, warrant further analysis. On average, there are about five candidate moves out of typically 25-35 legal moves. This is a fairly quick step as you are only identifying your main choices.
4. Thoroughly analyze all candidate moves. This is a time-consuming step where you look as deep as you can into the position in order to find the best move. It is usually most efficient to calculate forcing moves first.
5. Once you determine your best move, double check it to make sure it isn't a mistake. Make sure you aren't blundering away a piece or walking into a checkmate. If your move is okay, go ahead and make it. If not, go back to step 4.

When it is your opponent's move you should be looking at the big picture. This is the time to look at strategies for both players and make observations about the position.

Ask questions: where is the safest place for the kings, where should each player expand on the board, what is the best square for each piece, who wants to trade pieces and which ones, how are the pieces lined up for tactical patterns, what are each player’s dreams and goals, etc.

Piece Placement



Each piece has different strengths and weaknesses.

In order to develop a good plan, it is important to find the best way to effectively organize your pieces as a group.

Each piece may have different preferences in different phases of the game.

Pieces like to have mobility and options; you want each piece to play to its strength.

King

Proper positioning of the king is of paramount importance since checkmating him is the object of the game.

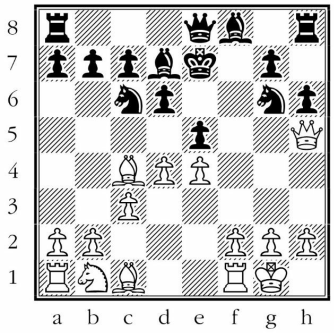
The king needs to be protected in the opening and middlegame, but he can be used as an offensive or defensive piece in the endgame.

Because the king is valuable and slow-moving and the main battle usually takes place in the middle of the board, it is best in the opening and middlegame to keep him away from the center.

Castling early in the game should be a high priority since castling moves the king out of the center to safety. Castling also develops a rook.

It is a good idea to avoid moving too many pawns in front of your castled king as this can leave him exposed and vulnerable to attack. Also, don't move pawns on the side of the board where you plan to castle.

When an exposed king doesn't get checkmated, often the defender has to give up material in order to survive the attack.



Position after 10…Qe8
White to move

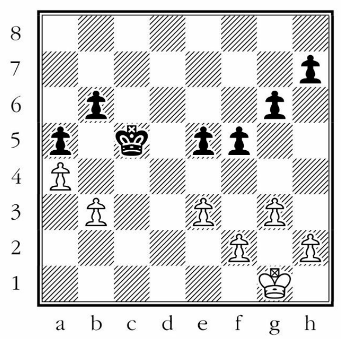
White's king is safely castled.

White sacrificed a piece earlier in the game that forced Black's king to move and become a target on e7. White can checkmate Black's king in two moves by playing **11.Bg5+ hxg5 12.Qxg5 mate** or **11.Qg5+ hxg5 12.Bxg5 mate**.

In the endgame, once the risk of getting checkmated in the middle of the board has passed, the king should move toward the center to join the battle.

This is called *centralizing* your king.

Normally it is safe to centralize the king once the enemy queen and about half of the opponent's rooks, bishops, and knights, are captured since the risk of being checkmated in the middle of the board is reduced.

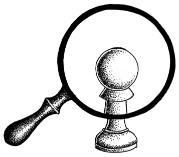


Position after 53…Kc5
White to move

Black's king is much better positioned near the center than White's king and will capture White's pawns on the queenside.

White moves his king toward the center by playing **54.Kf1**. Black will win the game by playing **54…Kb4 55.Ke2 Kxb3 56.Kd3 Kxa4** and advancing his queenside pawns with the support of his king.

Pawn



Pawns make up the backbone of your position.

In the opening, try to control the center of the board with your pawns.

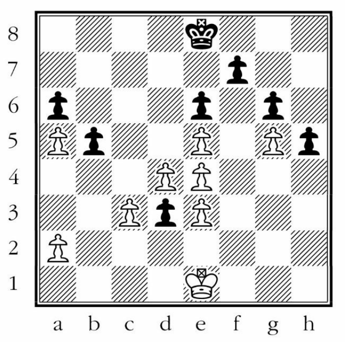
Pawns in front of a castled king should generally avoid moving forward since this exposes the king, unless you are creating luft, as discussed earlier.

Although they are the least valuable piece, take good care of your pawns and try not to lose them, as they are the only piece with the potential to promote into a queen.

Promotions usually occur in the endgame when the opponent has fewer pieces on the board to stop the pawns from promoting.

When a pawn promotes, the vast majority of the time you want to promote to a queen, since she is the most powerful piece. You don't need lots of extra queens; usually one or two is more than enough to win the game. In fact, the risk of stalemate is much higher when you have additional queens on the board.

Pawns can be strong or weak depending on their positioning on the board in relation to the other pawns and pieces. They prefer to be positioned side by side, like at the start of the game, because they have the ability to protect each other when they are on adjacent files. Pawns in front of each other on the same file don't have this ability.



White is a pawn ahead in this position that illustrates the different types of pawns and pawn structures. Adding knights, bishops, rooks, or queens to the position doesn't change how the pawns are defined.

A *passed pawn* is a strong pawn because it can march across the board to its promotion square without running into an enemy pawn on the same file or the possibility of being captured by pawn on an adjacent file. In other words, a passed pawn is a pawn that has passed all of the opponent's pawns.

Black's pawns on d3 and h5 are passed pawns.

Since it is protected by the pawn on g6, Black's h5 pawn is called a *protected passed pawn*. Protected passed pawns are stronger than ordinary passed pawns because they have a friendly pawn to protect them.

The h5 pawn is also called an *outside passed pawn* because it far away from the center. The defending king has to travel further from the center to capture an outside passed pawn.

Isolated pawns are weak pawns that cannot be protected by a friendly pawn on an adjacent file.

White's pawns on a2, a5, and g5 are isolated. The a-pawns are called *doubled isolated pawns* because there are two of them on the same file.

White's three pawns on the e-file are not isolated, because the pawn on d4 is on an adjacent file and can provide protection. These pawns are called *tripled pawns* and are weak because they cannot protect each other. Tripled pawns are, however, stronger than tripled isolated pawns.

Base pawns are the weakest pawn in a *pawn chain* (where pawns protect each other diagonally) because they are the only pawn that is not protected by another pawn. Black has base pawns on a6 and f7. White has base pawns on c3 and e3.

A *backward pawn* is a specific type of base pawn, one on a half-open file whose friendly neighboring pawns are too far advanced to protect it. Backward pawns are especially weak when they can be attacked by rooks on the file. Black has a backward pawn on f7 and White has one on c3.

Pawns can have both weak and strong attributes. For example, although technically not an isolated pawn because Black has a pawn on e6, Black's passed pawn on d3 acts like an *isolated passed pawn*. The weak, isolated attribute is dominant in this case because of the proximity of White's king.

Pawn islands are another important feature of a pawn formation.

Imagine rivers running up and down the files where each player has no pawns. Each cluster of pawns that is divided by the water is referred to as a pawn island.

Open files (rivers) from White's perspective are the b- and f-file. White has 3 pawn islands.

From Black's perspective, the only file where he doesn't have any pawns is the c-file. This river divides his pawns into two islands.

Since pawns can only protect one another on their respective islands, when both players have the same number of pawns, it is generally better to have fewer islands.

Tips for Pawns

- One of your strategies should be to create a strong pawn structure for yourself so you can provide a solid framework without weaknesses.

- Try to wreck your opponent’s pawn structure and weaken his pawns with the hope of winning those pawns later.

- When you have a choice of two pawns to capture with in the opening or middlegame, you generally want to capture toward the center since this tends to give you better control of the center. In the endgame, it may be better to capture away from the center to create an outside passed pawn.

- Other considerations, like each player’s pawn structure and the squares available for the other pieces, are important when considering whether to capture toward or away from the center.

- When recapturing a piece, novice players tend to see a pawn capture first and automatically make it. Keep in mind that capturing with another piece might be a better choice since a pawn capture typically doubles and weakens the pawns.
- Besides lacking potential pawn protection, another weakness of an isolated or backward pawn is the square in front of it. This square can be an outpost for an enemy piece since it cannot be attacked by a pawn.

- Isolated pawns on a file where they can be easily attacked by the opponent’s rooks on his back rank can be particularly weak.

Knight

Knights are slow-moving pieces and the only piece that can jump over other pieces.

Because they are relatively slow, knights like to be in the center because they can move to any place on the board fairly quickly.

Knights are especially effective attacking pieces when they are close to the action, particularly when they are near the opponent’s king.

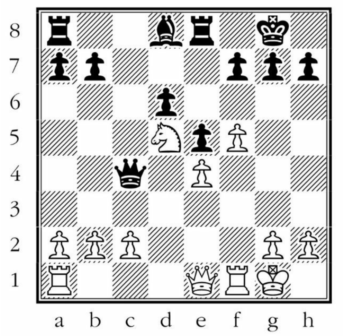
Because of their jumping abilities, knights tend to like closed positions with more pawns. The long-range bishops, rooks, and queens are restricted with more pawns on the board.

Knights can attack both light and dark squares (unlike bishops that are restricted to one color).

Because of their unique L-shaped movement, they can attack other pieces (not other knights) without the enemy piece attacking them back.

Knights are highly tactical pieces and should be activated quickly in the opening.

A *knight outpost* is a strong knight anchored by a pawn that can’t be attacked or chased away by an enemy pawn. Knight outposts are most effective when they are in enemy territory on the fifth or sixth rank.



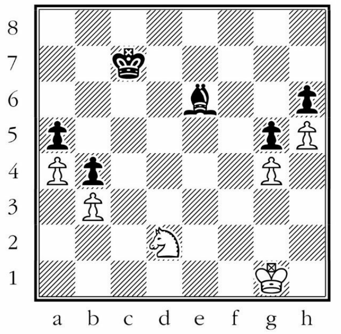
Position after 17…Bd8
White to move

White has a strong knight outpost in the center on d5 where he attacks the b6, c7, e7, and f6 squares in Black's territory. Note that Black doesn't have a piece of equal or lesser value that can threaten the knight and chase it away from this strong central square.

Knights are poorly placed on the edge of the board because their movement is limited to a maximum of four squares (or worse in the corner of the board where they can only move to two squares). Remember the old chess rhyme, "A knight on the rim is dim."

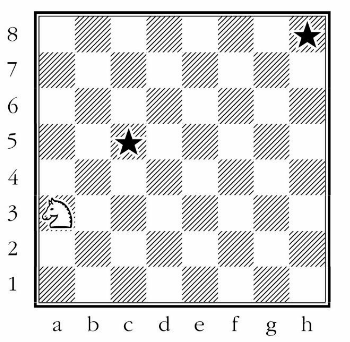
Knights can also be trapped on the edge of the board due to their restricted mobility.

A general rule is that with six or more pawns each on the board, the knight tends to be favored over the bishop. Four or less pawns each tends to favor the bishop. Five pawns each is the theoretical break-even point.



Position after 52.Nd2 (from f1)
Black to move

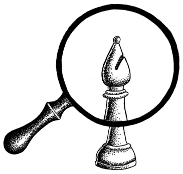
Black’s long-range bishop attacks White pawns on both sides of the board.
White’s knight can only protect one of the pawns because the pawns are spread too far apart.



It takes a knight the same amount of time to move to a square two squares away diagonally as it does to move all the way across the board.

It takes four moves for the knight on a3 to reach c5 (one possible path is Na3-c2-d4-b3-c5) or to reach h8 (one possible path is Na3-c4-e5-g6-h8).

Bishop



Bishops like open diagonals that aren’t blocked by pawns.

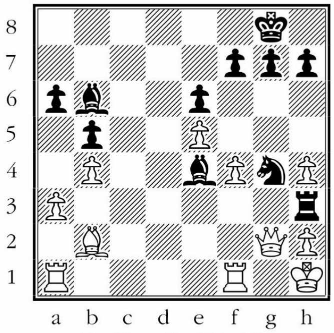
The bishops are the only pieces that can’t interfere with each other.

Both players get a light-squared bishop and a dark-squared bishop that must stay on their respective colors throughout the game.

A bishop is considered strong when it is on an open diagonal and weak if the diagonal is blocked by pawns. A bishop blocked by its own pawns is called a *bad bishop*.

When both bishops are on the board, the player has what is called the *bishop pair*, which can be a big advantage in open positions and is worth about an additional half a pawn in material.

When bishops work together on adjacent diagonals, they are called *raking bishops*.



Position after 25…Rh3
White to move

Black sacrificed his queen for this attack.
Note the power of Black’s raking bishops.
The bishop on e4 pins White’ queen to his king and the bishop on b6 attacks the g1 square near White’s king.

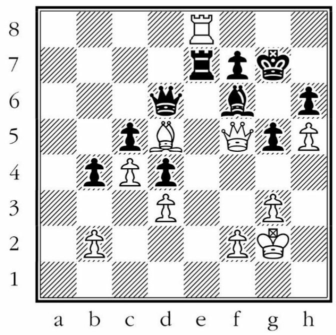
Black threatens **26…Rxh2 mate**.

As pieces trade leaving one player with a dark-squared bishop and the other with a light-squared bishop, a situation arises where *opposite-colored bishops* remain in the game.

This is a unique situation where the strategy varies, depending on if it is a middlegame or endgame position.

Opposite-colored bishops in the middlegame favor the player with the more aggressively placed bishop as it relates to attacking chances against the opposing king.

The attacker essentially has an extra attacking piece on the color of his bishop because his opponent's bishop can't defend squares of that color.



Position after 47…Re7
White to move

White has a more aggressively placed bishop and carries out his attack on the light squares.

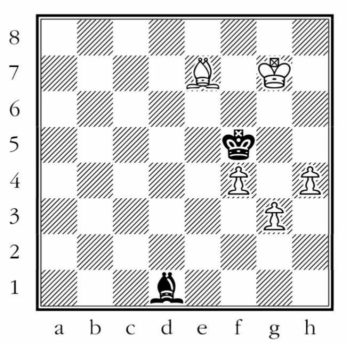
By sacrificing his queen, White can force checkmate with **48.Qg6+! fxg6 49.Rg8+ Kh7 50.hxg6 mate**.

Note that Black's dark-squared bishop couldn't help defend the light squares.

Opposite-colored bishop endgames tend to result in draws because the defending player controls the colored squares of his bishop.

In order for the player with the advantage to win, he usually has to promote a pawn. The defender can often set up a roadblock on the color of his bishop to prevent enemy pawns from advancing.

The bishops cannot take each other.



Position after 50.Be7
Black to move

Normally a material advantage of three pawns is an easy position to win.

But this opposite-color bishop ending is drawn because White cannot make progress and advance a pawn safely to its promotion square.

Black doesn’t have to move his king and his bishop can safely move back and forth on the d1-h5 diagonal.

The only pawn White can safely advance is the h4 pawn, but his king must be on h6 to protect it from the bishop if the pawn moves to h5.

If this happens, White’s king won’t be able to move out of the way of the h-pawn while still protecting it, giving Black’s bishop the opportunity to capture it.

Rook

Rooks are usually the last pieces to enter the game because they start furthest away from the center.

Gaining a rook for a minor piece is called *winning the exchange*.

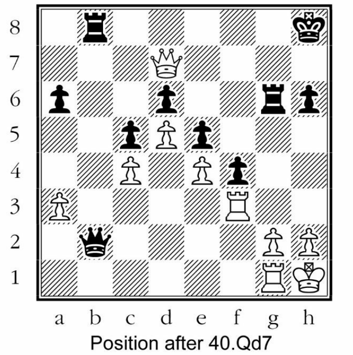
Rooks should stay on or near the first rank in the opening so they are as far away as possible from the opponent's bishops and knights who would like to trade for them.

Closed positions with pawns blocking the files are unfavorable to rooks.

Rooks become more powerful and can attack more squares as the game progresses because pawns trade and files open.

Rooks like open files where they can invade their opponent's position and are strongest when they are connected, either doubled on a file or connected on a rank.

Although it is usually protected by the opponent's rooks and other pieces, rooks like moving to the 8th rank because of the back rank checkmate possibilities.



Position after 40.Qd7
Black to move

Even though he has a rook on g1, White's back rank is vulnerable because of the activity of Black's major pieces

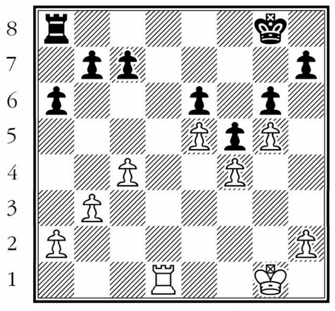
who can invade on the b- and g-files.
Black forces mate by sacrificing his queen with **40...Qxg2+!**
White is forced to play **41.Rxg2**.
Black now takes advantage of White's back rank by playing
41…Rb1+ 42.Rf1 Rxf1+ 43.Rg1 R(either)xg1 mate.

Rooks like moving to the 7th rank where they can attack pawns that have not moved.

The rook normally gets to the 7th rank in the endgame when enough pieces are traded off so that the 7th rank squares cannot easily be protected by the opponent's pieces.

An extra bonus of moving a rook to the 7th rank is that this is the time when the opponent's king wants to centralize, but often cannot because the rook cuts him off, trapping him on the back rank.

For these reasons, a rook on the 7th rank is generally considered to be worth a pawn.



Position after 45.Rd1
Black to move

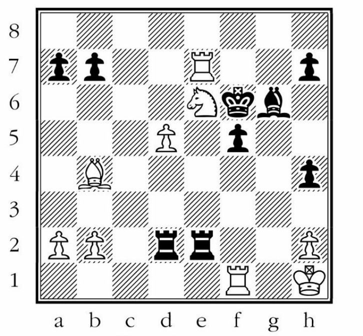
White has control of the open d-file.
On the next move White threatens to play 46.Rd7 and control the 7th rank.
Black's king would be trapped on the back rank where both he and the Black rook will be forced into passive positions defending pawns.
White could then centralize his king.
To counter this threat, Black could play **45…Rf8**.
After **46.Rd7**, Black could play **46…Rf7** to defend his

second rank and neutralize White’s rook.

If one rook on the 7th rank is good, two are even better.

Two rooks on the 7th not only have an easier time winning pawns, but also create mate threats along the 7th rank or possible rook-rook roller mates using the 7th and 8th ranks, which we will examine later in the Endgame Strategy section.

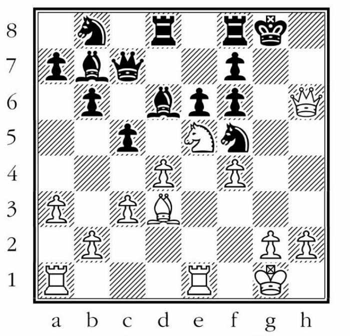
If a forced mate is not possible with two rooks on the 7th rank, they often win pawns or can force a threefold repetition draw by perpetual check when there aren’t winning chances.



Position after 32.Bb4?
Black to move

Black’s connected rooks on the 7th rank force checkmate in two moves by playing **32…Rxh2+ 33.Kg1 Rdg2 mate**.

If an open or half-open file in front of the opponent’s king doesn’t exist, a rook can move forward two or more ranks on an open file and then move horizontally in front of his own pawns to aim at the opposing king or another target. This is called a *rook lift*.


Position after 18…Nf5
White to move

White eliminates Black’s knight by playing **19.Bxf5**, threatening 20.Qh7 mate.

After **19…exf5** (or 19…Rfe8), White can play **20.Re3** lifting the rook so it can move in front of the g2 pawn to attack Black’s king.

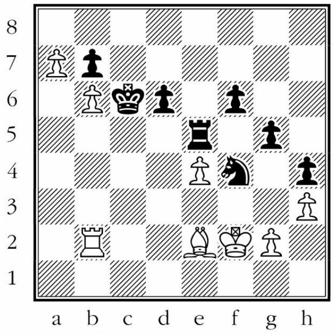
Black can only postpone mate by playing **20…Bf3**.

White can then play **21.Rxf3** followed by **22.Rg3 mate**.

Since rooks enter the game later than the other pieces, the odds are greater that they will still be on the board in the endgame.

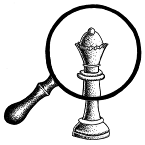
Rooks like to be behind their own passed pawns in the endgame to provide protection for the pawn as it moves up the board to promote.

Rooks are also well placed behind an opponent’s passed pawn because it gives the rook greater mobility as the pawn advances.


Position after 48.a7
Black to move

Black must play either 48…Ra5 or 48…Re8 to defend the a8 promotion square of White's protected passed pawn.
48…Re8 allows the 49.Bb5+ skewer.
Even if the rook could block the pawn by somehow reaching a8, the rook's mobility would be severely limited in front of the protected passed pawn.
After playing **48…Ra5** Black's rook can move up and down the a-file while still defending the a8 promotion square.
White's rook would also be well-placed behind his a7 pawn, so he plays **49.Bc4**, protecting a2.
Black can't stop the threat of **50.Ra2** trading or chasing away Black's rook and then promoting the pawn.

Queen



Queens are the best attacker and the most powerful and feared piece on the board.

In the opening, the queen should generally stay out of the battle, since she is a target for enemy knights and bishops, who can gain time chasing her around or even trap her.

Because the queen is the most valuable piece, she is often not the best defender because when attacked by an enemy piece of lesser value, she is compelled to move and may have to abandon whatever defensive duties she was performing.

When combined with a bishop or rook, queens are powerful in open positions with open diagonals and files.

Because of her awesome powers, the queen is usually the best checkmating piece.

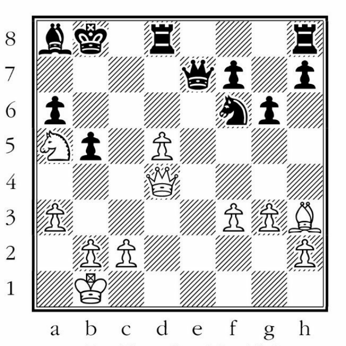
She can back rank checkmate using her rook powers.

If a king is exposed, the enemy queen becomes amazingly powerful, and with the help of only one piece to protect her, she can move right next to the king and checkmate him.

When she can’t checkmate the exposed king, a queen can usually check from many squares and often win material by forking the king and other pieces.

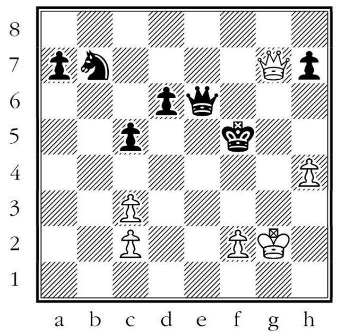
She can also sometimes force a three-move repetition draw, by perpetual check, if there aren’t winning chances in the position.

An important concept that is frequently overlooked is that knights work well with queens when attacking the king because both pieces can attack both light and dark squares.

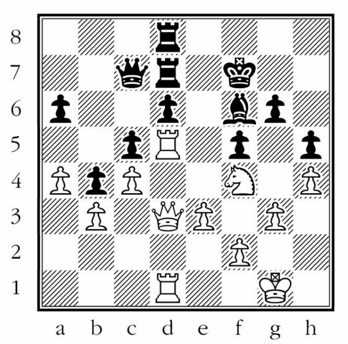

Position after 26…Kb8
White to move

White's queen forces checkmate with the help and protection from the knight with **27.Qb6+ Bb7** 27…Qb7 28.Nc6 mate. **28.Nc6+ Ka8 29.Qa7 mate**.

When pawns and pieces are traded, space opens up in the endgame, increasing the queen's long-range powers.


Position after 48…Qxe6 (R)
White to move

Both queens are powerful in this open position since most of the pieces are traded.
White's queen can capture the knight with 49.Qxb7 or the pawn with 49.Qxh7+.
White has a better choice by playing **49.Qg5+**.
49…Ke4 is forced.
White can then play **50.f3 mate**.



Position after 32...h5
White to move

White tripled his major pieces on the d-file, attacking the backward d6 pawn.

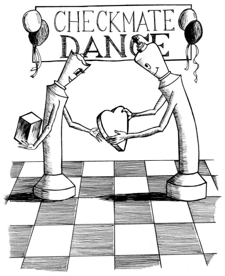
All Black’s major pieces defend the d6 pawn.

Although Black’s queen has seven safe squares available to her, she is actually trapped on the queenside where she can’t provide protection for the king.

White can attack the f5 pawn with a pawn and threaten to break in on the kingside by playing **33.e4**.

After **33…fxe4 34.Qxe4**, White’s queen becomes active and threatens to invade on g6 or e6 with a powerful attack on Black’s king.

Trading and Exchanging Pieces



Knowing when to exchange pieces is one of the most important strategic decisions you will make during the game.

Always have a reason when trading or exchanging pieces and don't fall in love with any particular piece that you refuse to trade.

There are general rules regarding when to trade and when not to trade. Of course, there are exceptions to every rule.

You generally don't want to trade your stronger pieces for your opponent's weaker ones when they have the same numerical point value. Try to win your opponent's weak pawns, not trade your better pawns for them.

Another tip you can use to help determine if you generally want to trade pieces is to ask yourself who would win the king and pawn ending if all the pieces taller than a pawn traded for their counterpart. If you think you will win the king and pawn ending, trading a pair of equally valued pieces is likely a positive step in that direction.

Besides the more common reasons to trade which we will discuss below, other reasons you may trade pieces would be:

- to open or close lines of attack
- to eliminate an opponent's defender
- to weaken your opponent's pawn structure
- to gain or avoid losing time

Counting Material

When counting to see who is ahead in material, always count material that is on the board.

Many novice players count the material off the board in the opening – because there are fewer pieces, making it easier, and count the material on the board in the endgame – again, because it is easier.

Counting material off the board can lead to an error for a number of reasons: a piece fell off the table, a piece is out of view behind the clock or a soda, your opponent is holding a captured piece in his hand, players on the board next to you have a similar chess set and you are counting a captured piece from their game, or maybe a pawn promoted.

An easy way to count the material on the board is to cancel out like pieces (instead of adding all the pieces for one player and then subtracting all the pieces for the other player) to determine the difference. You are only interested in who is ahead and by how much, not how many total points you or your opponent have.

Trade equal valued pieces when you have material advantage

If you have more material (or points) than your opponent, you have what is called a material advantage.

It is normally a good idea to trade equal value pieces (not necessarily pawns) when you have a lead in material because with less total pieces on the board, positions tend to be simpler, making them easier to win.

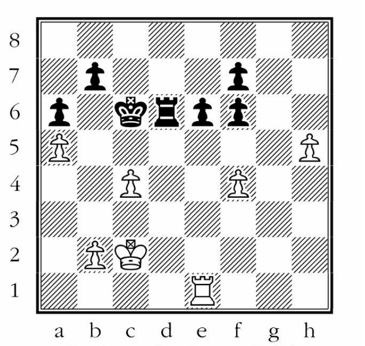
The opposite is true. If you are behind in material, you generally want to keep pieces on the board to make things more complicated and difficult for your opponent. The chances of him making a mistake are greater if the position is complicated and unbalanced.

Trading pawns when you are behind in material, is often a good idea especially if you can eliminate all your opponent’s pawns (which are potentially future queens) and leave him with insufficient mating material of a knight or bishop.

Trade to simplify the position to reach a winning endgame

Trading down to an easily winning endgame is a good strategy.

When you have a worse position in the middlegame, don’t trade pieces and go into an inferior endgame.



Position after 37…gxf6 (B)
White to move

White simplifies the position by trading rooks in order to achieve an easily winning king and pawn endgame with **38.Rd1**.

Black’s rook is trapped and can’t avoid the exchange.

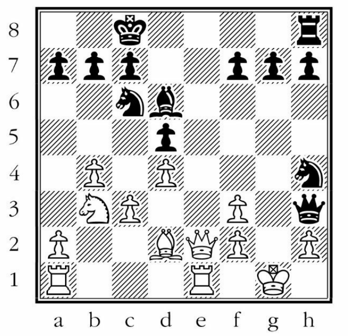
After the rooks trade with say **38…Rxd1 39.Kxd1**, White can play **40.h6** and soon promote the pawn.

Avoid trading pieces when you are attacking

The player with the safer king usually does not want to trade queens.

Trading equal valued pieces, especially queens, is generally not a good idea when you are attacking your opponent's king because it reduces your attacking force.

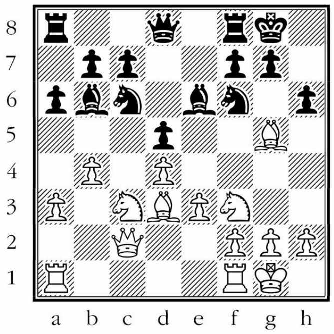
Of course, the defending player usually wants to eliminate attackers because this reduces the force of the opponent's attack.



Position after 15…Qh3
White to move

White tries to trade queens by playing **16.Qf1**.
If Black trades queens, White's king will survive the attack.
Black instead plays **16…Qxh2 mate**.

Avoid trading active pieces for passive ones



Position after 12…h6
White to move

Black attacked White’s bishop that is pinning the knight to the queen.

White should play **13.Bh4** which keeps the annoying pin in place.

Releasing the pin with 13.Bxf6 Qxf6 would be a mistake because the bishop has freedom and the knight is restricted by the pin.

13…g5, breaking the pin, would be good for White after he plays 14.Bg3 because moving the g-pawn forward exposes Black’s king.

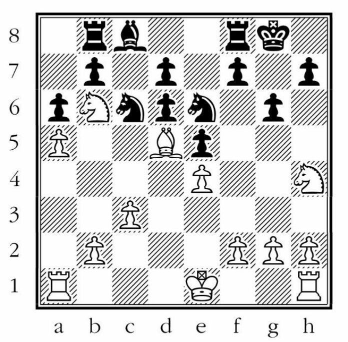
If Black breaks the pin by moving the queen off the h4-d8 diagonal, White would then be willing to trade the bishop for the knight because Black would have to recapture with the g-pawn, exposing Black’s king and isolating the three pawns protecting him on the kingside.

Note that if White’s queen and bishop on d3 switched places with the queen leading the attack on the diagonal, White would be willing to play 13.Bxf6 because it eliminates the protector of h7 and threatens 14.Qh7 mate.

Avoid trading pieces when you have more space on the board

The player with more space usually wants to keep pieces on the board since the additional space means more potential freedom for his pieces to operate.

The player with less space generally wants to trade equally valued pieces because this frees up potential squares for his remaining pieces.



Position after 17…Rb8
White to move

White sacrificed a pawn in order to gain more space and control of the board on the queenside and in the center.

White has no interest in trading any of his well-positioned minor pieces.

Black's pawns on the queenside and center are blocked by White's outposted knight on b6 and bishop on d5.

His pawns on the d-file are doubled backward pawns.

Black's bishop is blocked by his pawns on b7 and d7. These pawns are not going to move any time soon without help from White.

Black's b8 rook is prevented from moving toward the center by his bishop on c8.

Although both pieces are worth three pawns, it would be a serious mistake for White to trade his knight on b6 for

Black's bishop with 18.Nxc8 because the knight is a much better piece and the rook would be freed.

It would also be a bad idea for White to trade his bishop for either of Black's knights by playing 18.Bxc6 or 18.Bxe6 because when Black recaptures with his d-pawn, not only did White help Black fix his pawn structure, but by allowing the d-pawn to move, the bishop can now enter the game, followed by the b8 rook.

Types of Advantages

To develop the proper strategy, you must take into account the different types of advantages that exist in chess.

A chess master evaluates each type of advantage for many possible outcomes and then combines them to determine which position is best for him.

Each move creates strengths and weaknesses in the position.

Just like in sports, the player who gains an advantage has more options, while the player who falls behind has fewer choices and, as the pressure mounts, increased odds of making a mistake.

The types of advantages in chess are:

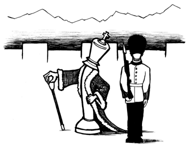
- king safety
- material
- piece activity
- space
- pawn structure

These must be carefully combined to assess a chess position correctly in order to develop the best strategy.

You will need to evaluate the pros and cons of each player’s position as you calculate variations in search of the best move.

For example, you may sacrifice a pawn to open up an attack on your opponent’s king. Or you may allow your opponent to wreck your pawn structure or win material if you can gain time and activate your pieces in return.

King Safety



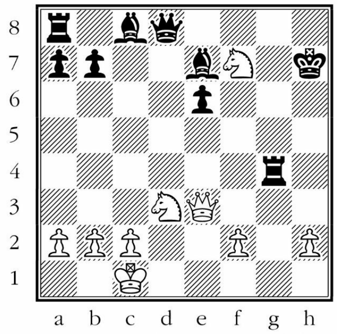
Of the types of advantages, ultimately king safety is the most important because checkmate is the object of the game.

Because king safety is so vital, avoid making weak moves that create opportunities for your opponent to attack your king.

When a player hasn’t castled in the opening and some of the center pawns have been exchanged, his king is an easy target for the opponent’s pieces to attack.

Clearing a path to a king by eliminating the pawns that protect him is a common attacking idea. Of course, the defender wants to lock up the pawns in front his king.

When the defender’s king becomes exposed and can’t be checkmated where he is, a strategy for the attacker is to draw him into the open with a series of forcing checks.



Position after 26…Rxg4 (R)
White to move

White sacrificed material to eliminate Black’s pawns and pieces that were protecting the king.

White chases Black’s king toward the center and forces mate with a queen and knight by playing **27.Qh6+ Kg8 28.Qh8+ Kxf7 29.Ne5 mate**.

Material

In the mind of most novice players, material is usually the most important type of advantage.

A material advantage is easy to calculate and doesn't require more complex judgment calls.

When evaluating a position, start with material to get a sense for which player may be willing to trade pieces.

Material is a semi-permanent advantage since it normally doesn't change hands from move-to-move.

Be suspicious when your opponent offers you material, it might be a trap.

Material advantages are usually gained through tactical operations.

Saving your own material is playing good defense and is as important as winning your opponent's material.

When a player gains a material advantage, several strategies change.

The most important of these is that the player who has a lead in material has the option to exchange pieces and head toward a winning endgame. Of course, his opponent usually doesn't want to trade pieces in this situation.

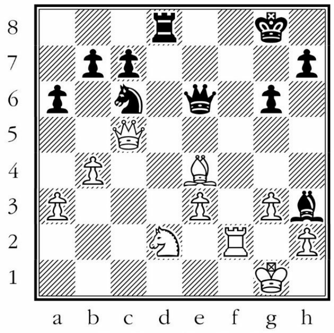
Being ahead in material can lead to a piece activity advantage.

The player who is ahead can attack his opponent's pieces, offering a trade. The opponent must either trade or run away, leaving the player who is ahead in material the choice of squares for his pieces and possibly gaining space in the process.

King safety also becomes more important when a player obtains a lead in material.

Once you gain a winning material advantage, one of your top priorities is to make sure your king is safely protected from an all-out attack.

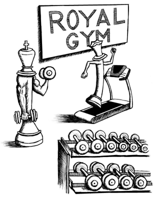
The player who is behind, since he can’t trade down to a losing endgame, is now in a critical situation where he is becoming desperate and should seriously consider throwing everything at his opponent’s king, even if the attack seems speculative, in hopes to turn the game around and maybe even checkmate the king.



Position after 27.Rf2
Black to move

White’s knight is pinned to a back rank mate threat by the rook on d8.
Black can safely capture the bishop by playing **27…Qxe4!** because if the knight takes the queen with 28.Nxe4, then 28…Rd1+ 29.Rf1 Rxf1 mate.
Black comes out ahead a bishop in material.

Piece Activity



Placing your pieces on good squares is a key to winning in all three phases of the game.

Good piece placement leads to successful attacks on the king and sets up tactical opportunities to win material. You want your pieces to be well-coordinated.

Piece activity is also defined as mobility. Greater mobility leads to more choices.

Along with striving to move your pieces to active squares, you also want to prevent your opponent from mobilizing his pieces.

Time is a concept that goes hand in hand with piece activity and also with space. You want to get your pieces to the best squares as quickly as possible. Wasting moves, or tempi, can cost you the game. Develop a plan that is efficient and doesn't waste time.

When a player has the opportunity to capture a pawn away from the main battle, he has to decide whether the pawn is worth the loss in tempi, which his opponent can use to increase the mobility of his pieces and develop an attack.

Capturing a pawn in this manner, when it appears to be a risky endeavor, is called *pawn grabbing*.

Bringing your queen out early in the opening where she can be attacked by bishops and knights and chased around the board is another way to lose time.

A less obvious way to lose time is to trade one of your developed pieces for an opponent's piece that is undeveloped.

A common way to gain time or a tempo is to develop your pieces to squares that attack something that your opponent must take time to defend.

Let’s say, you develop your pieces faster than your opponent. There may only be a small window available to capitalize on this as your opponent may be able to quickly catch up with his development.

Therefore, gaining time is usually more of a temporary advantage.

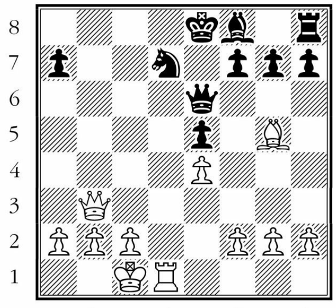
When selecting your candidate moves, include moving a piece from a passive square to a more active square.

Piece activity is more critical in open positions than closed positions because with fewer pawns on the board the pieces can more rapidly invade enemy territory.

Closed positions where pawns are locked up make it more difficult for the enemy pieces to invade.

A few general rules that relate piece activity to material are:

- In the opening, two to three moves in development is considered to be worth a pawn.
- In the endgame, a rook on the seventh rank (active rook) is worth about a pawn.
- Active pieces lead to tactical opportunities that can win material.



Position after 15…Nxd7 (B)
White to move

White sacrificed material to reach this position. Note that

Black hasn’t developed his bishop or rook.

Because all three of White’s pieces are on active squares, he can force checkmate on Black’s uncastled king by sacrificing his queen with **16.Qb8+! Nxb8 17.Rd8 mate**.

Space

Space closely relates with piece activity.

The player who controls more of the board has more space, giving his pieces more freedom.

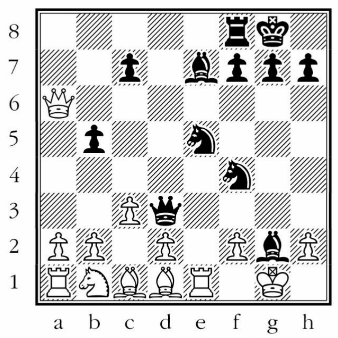
At the start of the game, each player has four ranks on his half of the board.

Advancing your pawns into your opponent's territory is the most obvious way to gain space. Your pieces should quickly fall in line behind them to help support the invasion.

Not only can you use your pawns to gain space, you can effectively use them to limit your opponent's space.

A basic strategy for both players is to expand and attack on the side of the board where they have more space and piece mobility.

It is also important to move at least one pawn into the center in the opening to help prevent your opponent from advancing his center pawns into your territory and cramping your position.



Position after 15.Re1
Black to move

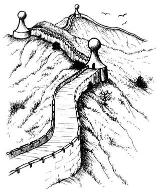
Because White didn't move his d-pawn earlier in the game, Black was able to block it, preventing White's queenside pieces from developing and giving Black more space and piece activity in the center and on the kingside.

Black wins with **15…Qf3!** protecting the bishop on g2 a second time and threatening 16…Nh3 mate.

If White captures the queen with 16.Bxf3, Black can play 16…Nxf3 mate.

After **16.h4**, Black checkmates the king by playing **16…Nh3+ 17.Kh2 Ng4 mate**.

Pawn Structure



Pawn structure is the backbone of a chess position and plays a big role in determining the strategies used in the game.

Positions can be categorized as open, semi-open, semi-closed, or closed.

Open positions, where the center pawns have been exchanged, result in battles that involve the direct combat of the pieces. Piece activity, time, and tactics are most critical in open positions.

Closed positions lend themselves to more strategic battles where the pawns act as barriers. The pieces look for ways to move around the pawn blockade.

Semi-open and semi-closed positions fall in the middle range with more of a balance between strategy and tactics.

Pawn structure advantages tend to be more permanent, long-lasting advantages since, like material, they usually don’t change on a move-by-move basis. The pawn structure itself may be dynamic because it can change every time a pawn is moved.

Fixing a weak pawn structure often requires your opponent’s help because you have to capture one of his pieces for a pawn to change files.

A *minority attack* is an attack by several pawns against a larger group of pawns with the idea of weakening the larger group and opening up lines of attack for the pieces.

A *pawn storm* is a strategy in which several pawns on adjacent files are moved in rapid succession toward the opponent’s defenses.

Symmetrical pawn structures occur when the pawns for each player are opposite each other on the same files.

Asymmetrical pawn structures are when a player has a pawn on a file where the opponent does not.

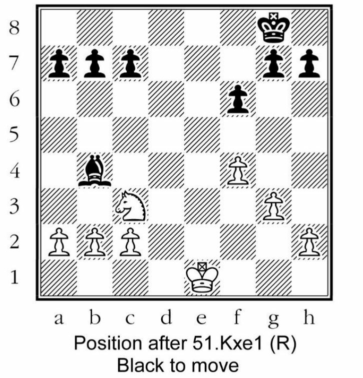
Keep in mind that moving pawns forward can create *holes,* which are weak squares that cannot be defended by a pawn and are ideal for the opponent to occupy with a piece.

Pawn structure is critical to an attack as the attacking player tries to open the position for his pieces to attack the enemy king. In this case, the defender tries to keep the pawn structure locked up to create a barrier to block the attack.

You want to create strong pawns, typically passed and protected passed pawns, for yourself, since they have the potential to promote in the endgame.

Always be on the lookout for ways to wreck your opponent's pawn structure to create weak pawns, which are targets where you can focus your attacking energy.

Keep in mind that weakening your opponent's pawn structure by doubling his pawns may sometimes have a negative effect since it can give his rooks the opportunity to invade on the newly opened file.



Position after 51.Kxe1 (R)
Black to move

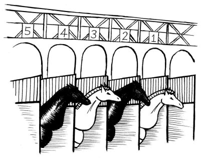
Black's best move is **51…Bxc3+**.

White would have to recapture with **52.bxc3** leaving White with three isolated pawns on the queenside.

If Black instead centralized his king by playing 51…Kf7, White could play 52.Kd2.

If Black then tries to weaken White’s pawn structure with 52…Bxc3+, White could recapture by playing 53.Kxc3 to keep his pawn structure solid.

Opening Strategy



The three goals in the opening are control the center, develop your pieces, and castle early.

Controlling the center gives you space, which enhances piece activity. Developing is bringing your pieces into the game and relates to piece activity. Castling improves king safety and piece activity by developing the rook. You always want to try to win material and have a good pawn structure.

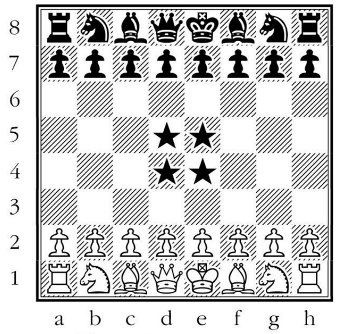
By following these three general principles and keeping them in balance you should have good positions as you enter the middlegame.

If you get out of balance and spend too much time trying to control the center and developing, but neglect to castle, you may end up with your king permanently stuck in the center of the board.

Specific opening books show how masters have used these basic principles to begin the game. Until you reach the higher rating levels these books are not necessary. Your time is best spent keeping your opening study to a minimum.

It is more important that you spend your time becoming proficient at picking up clues and learning how to develop a solid plan based on your observations.

Control the center



The center squares are d4, d5, e4, and e5.

Splitting the board in half, both players have four ranks on their side of the board.

The two most popular opening moves for White are 1.e4 and 1.d4. Both of these moves stake a claim in the center and free a bishop.

If your opponent responds with a move that allows the other center pawn to safely advance two squares, it is usually a good idea to move it forward and control the center with both pawns.

After taking control of the center, you should then quickly develop your minor pieces (knights and bishops) to support your center pawns and castle to safeguard your king.

If possible, don’t be afraid to push a center pawn into your opponent’s territory to gain a little additional space.

Develop your pieces

Develop your knights and bishops quickly and efficiently. Coordinate your minor piece development so these pieces don't block each other and can flow easily into the game.

Knights tend to be a little more valuable than bishops in the opening because there are more pawns on the board and they can jump over other pieces to develop without first moving a pawn.

Develop your knights toward the center of the board (usually f3 and c3 for White, f6 and c6 for Black).

Unless you have a good reason, avoid developing knights to the edge or rim of the board where their mobility is restricted.

There is an old chess saying, "Knights before bishops".

You will generally have a good idea where to develop the knights.

The bishops, on the other hand, usually have several decent development squares to choose from and it can make a big difference which one you select. By developing your knight first, you delay developing the bishop a move or two, which sometimes gives you a better idea which square is best for the bishop.

When bringing your bishops into the game, try to develop them outside your pawn chains where they have more mobility and are not blocked by your pawns.

Try to move bishops only once on a diagonal.

If you plan to castle on the kingside, to speed up castling you generally want to develop your kingside bishop first.

Usually the bishops are developed toward the center of the board.

Sometimes a bishop is developed to the square in front of the knight's starting square (b2, g2, b7, or g7). The Italian word *fianchetto* describes this event.

When planning to fianchetto a bishop, it is often best to move the knight pawn (b- or g-pawn) forward only one square, since moving it up two squares places it in line with one of the opponent's bishops at the start of the game.

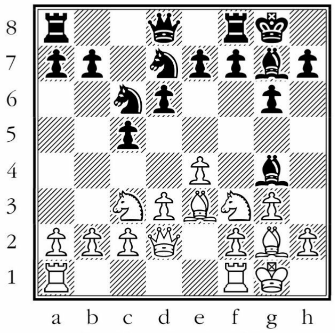
A fianchettoed bishop can be powerful because it is located on the longest diagonal of the board and is aimed at both center squares of its color.

Keep in mind that it takes an extra move to fianchetto a bishop because moving a knight pawn is required before the bishop can be developed.

When you develop a bishop through the center a pawn must also move. Moving a center pawn is useful by itself because it helps you gain control of the center. Developing a bishop through the center in a sense saves a tempo compared to fianchettoing it because moving the pawn in front of a knight normally isn't a particularly useful move.

Because the knight pawn moved forward, when you fianchetto a bishop in front of your castled king, it is usually a good idea to avoid trading it because that would leave holes in front of your king on the squares of the color of your now-removed bishop.

The weaknesses on these squares will increase if you trade your fianchettoed bishop for a knight in a position where your opponent still has that colored bishop because the opponent's bishop can invade these important squares.



Position after 9…Nd7
White to move

Both players fianchettoed their kingside bishop.

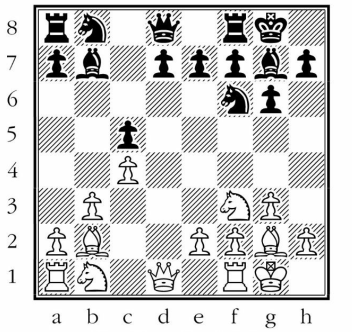
Black’s bishop on g7 is a strong bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal and attacks both dark squares in the center (d4 and e5).

White’s bishop on g2 is a bad bishop not so much because it is blocked by the knight, but because of the pawn on e4, which cannot safely move forward to open the h1-a8 diagonal.

White can eliminate Black’s powerful fianchettoed bishop that protects his king on the dark squares by playing **10.Bh6** (protected by the queen), pinning it to the rook on f8.

Exchanging the bishops would weaken the dark squares in front of Black’s castled king.

Black would not want to trade his dark-squared bishop for the knight on c3 since that would leave White with a queen and his dark-squared bishop that have the potential to invade the weak dark squares in front of Black’s king.



Position after 9.0-0
Black to move

Here is fairly rare occurrence where all four bishops fianchettoed.

White would like to trade the dark-squared bishops and Black would like to trade the light-squared bishops since such a trade would weaken those colored squares around the opponent’s king.

As general rule, don’t develop your queen early in the opening.

The danger in her coming out early is she can either get trapped if you aren’t paying attention or you will lose tempi if she is chased by your opponent’s pawns, knights, and bishops.

The main exception to this rule is when your opponent hasn’t developed quickly and you have attacking chances against his king. When you are attacking your opponent’s king, he will have to defend his king and not have time to chase your queen. Your queen is his most feared piece.

Another exception to this rule is moving your queen to a square that is difficult for your opponent to attack.

If your queen does come out early, say to recapture a pawn on d4/d5 respectively, you don’t have to necessarily retreat her back to d1/d8. Often you can find another safe square for her, like a4/a5.

Also keep in mind that if your opponent’s queen comes out early, know that it is generally a bad move, but be extra careful, as she is your opponent’s most powerful piece. Make sure the squares near your king are protected; f2 (for White) and f7 (for Black) are likely her target.

If pawns are traded early in the game and the d-file opens up where the queens attack each other, it is generally a good idea to be the first to trade queens if your opponent has to recapture with his king because he then loses the right to castle.

Castle early

Castling is the only time you can move two pieces in one turn.

The main reason to castle is to move the king out of the center where he is most vulnerable to attack.

It is easy to forget that castling also develops a rook and helps connect the rooks on the first rank.

Rooks usually enter the battle last because the other pieces need to clear out before they can move toward the center. Like the queen, if the rooks come out early in the game, they can be chased around by your opponent’s knights and bishops.

Rooks like to be on open files or files with the potential to open up later.

Try to keep your rooks on or close to the first rank; they can attack from long-range, are safer from enemy forces when further away from the action, and also better protect your king against back rank mates when stationed on the first rank.

Players often postpone castling because it doesn’t create any threats and can be perceived as a waste of time. If you don’t castle early and look for something better to do, after each additional move castling becomes more urgent because your opponent has more pieces developed and more threats.

While your king is still uncastled, don’t open the center when your opponent’s forces have a direct path to him. If your opponent hasn’t castled and you have, try to open the center and prevent his king from castling.

At the start of the game, the most vulnerable square near the king is f2 (for White) and f7 (for Black) because the king is the only protector. Compare this with the center pawns which are defended four times.

Moving the f-pawn forward can be risky because it exposes an uncastled king on two diagonals.

When your king is checked by a bishop early in the game, look to either capture the bishop or interpose a piece or pawn before deciding to move your king. Remember once you move your king, you lose the right to castle.

A common knight fork between an uncastled king and the queenside rook can take place on c2 (for White) and c7 (for Black).

When planning to castle on a particular side, as well as after you castle there, avoid moving pawns forward in front of your castled king, unless you are fianchettoing a bishop or creating a luft. Remember pawns can’t move backwards to cover up weaknesses made by moving forward.

Once you castle, don’t move your king into the corner without a good reason. This not only costs an extra tempo, but limits the king’s possible moves, sometimes making it easier to checkmate him. It will also cost you a tempo later in the endgame when it is time to centralize him. Once the king is castled, he is close enough to the edge of the board that the opponent can’t easily attack him from that side.

Sometimes when you castle on the queenside, you have to make an extra king move to the b-file, to get an extra square further away from the center. For this reason, and that it requires an additional tempo to move the queen when you castle queenside, in most games the players choose to castle on the kingside.

There are a few situations when choosing not to castle is the correct plan.

First, if the center is locked up with pawns, it might be safer for the king to live there as opposed to moving to the kingside or queenside where the position can open up later.

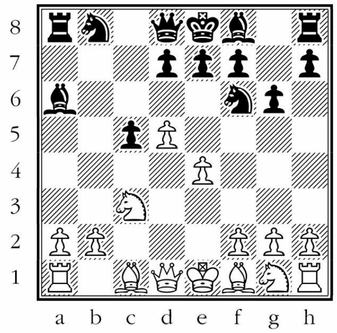
Second, when the queens are traded early (usually when the d-file opens up after a pawn exchange) as well as a set or two of minor pieces. In this case, the endgame looks to be fast approaching and the king may be safe in the center, where he will want to be located in the endgame.

A third possible situation is when your opponent hasn't developed his pieces quickly and is desperately trying to survive your attack. He won't have time to attack your king while he is busy defending his own king.

Sometimes the best strategy is to wait on castling. This would occur when your king is temporarily safe in the center, you have the option to castle on either side, and you want to wait to keep your opponent guessing which way you will go. You also might wait for your opponent to first pick a side to castle on first before you make a commitment.

At times, you may not be able to castle, but still need to get your king out of the center and bring your rook into the game. The process that accomplishes this is called *artificially castling* or *castling by hand*.

The king is moved toward the edge of the board on the second rank, allowing the rook to move past him toward the center on the first rank. The king can then move back to the first rank, toward the corner. This procedure takes a few more moves than castling but accomplishes the same goal.



Position after 7.e4
Black to move

By moving his pawn to e4, White allows Black to trade bishops and prevent him from castling.

White can achieve an artificially castled position after **7…Bxf1 8.Kxf1 d6 9.g3 Bg7 10.Kg2 0-0 11.Nf3 Nbd7**

12.Re1.

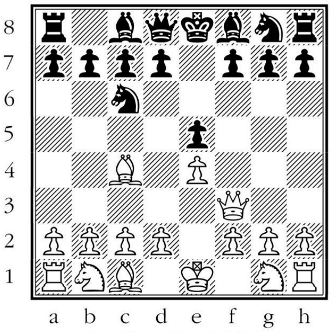
Scholar’s Mate

Since f2 (for White) and f7 (for Black) are the weakest squares near the king before castling, some beginners optimistically bring their queen out early to attack it in an attempt to quickly checkmate the king.

This is called the “Scholar’s Mate”, sometimes known as the “Four-Move Checkmate”.

Scholar’s Mate only works if the defender isn’t paying attention and asking what is being threatened. If the defender correctly defends against the threat, the attacker loses precious time because his queen will be chased around and possibly trapped. Playing as if your opponent will blunder is called playing for a *cheapo* and isn’t a good chess strategy. Always assume your opponent will make the best move.

Here is a typical Scholar’s Mate pattern.



Position after 3.Qf3?
Black to move

1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Nc6 3.Qf3? (or 3.Qh5? g6 4.Qf3 Nf6)
Bringing out the queen early and threatening to checkmate Black on f7.

3…Bc5?? 4.Qxf7 mate.

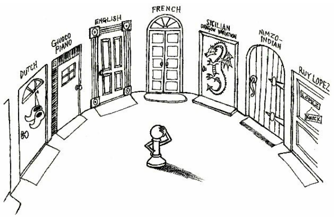
If Black instead plays 3…Nf6, 4…Bc5, and then 5…0-0, White wasted a queen move and placed her on a square where she will soon be chased away, perhaps by …Nd4. Bringing out the queen out early to f3 also prevents White’s knight from developing to its natural f3 square.

Even though you may win some quick games by bringing your queen out early, you should follow good chess principles and develop your bishops and knights first. You will usually beat an opponent who doesn’t ask what you are threatening, so follow good chess principles when you play.

If your opponent brings his queen out early, be extra careful when considering what is threatened and be mindful that the f2 or f7 square is likely the target.

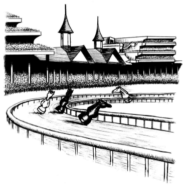
Tips on Opening Strategy

- Try to move each piece once to the desired square; don’t waste moves.
- Don’t move too many pawns; focus on developing your bishops and knights.
- Move pieces forward and try to avoid retreating.
- Make sure your pieces are protected.
- Recapture when your opponent takes your pieces.
- When you are playing Black, don’t copy your opponent’s moves just because you can. In symmetrical positions, both players have the same threats and White gets to move first.
- A pawn is worth two to three tempi in the opening. It can take time to grab pawns. Not only can the piece grabbing the pawn be trapped, but the opponent gains time to develop his pieces and possibly gain a lead in piece activity.
- It is more dangerous for Black to accept a pawn gambit than White, since he is already behind a tempo at the start of the game because White moves first.
- When trading minor pieces, it is generally best to recapture with knights first, especially when the loss of a bishop eliminates the bishop pair.
- Don’t open on the edge of the board because you are afraid to move pawns in front of your king in the center. Remember the king should castle quickly and leave the center before your opponent can develop an attack.
- Besides not controlling the center, 1.h4 and 2.Rh3 often loses the exchange because the rook on h3 is lined up with Black’s bishop on c8.


DUTCH
GIUOCO PIANO
ENGLISH
FRENCH
SICILIAN DRAGON VARIATION
NIMZO-INDIAN
RUY LOPEZ
LOPEZ
KNOCK

“Which opening should I choose?”

Middlegame Strategy



The middlegame is the most complicated part of the game where strategic themes vary depending on the opening system played.

While planning strategies for the middlegame, make sure you have completed your goals from the opening.

If you haven’t developed all of your pieces, completing your development is now very important.

Castling should be your highest priority if you haven’t completed it yet since by now your opponent’s pieces should be deployed, eyeing your monarch for cracks in his armor.

Fighting for the center is as critical in the middlegame as it is in the opening.

Middlegame strategies should be based on your observations.

Identify your opponent’s weaknesses (as well as your own so you know what you need to protect) and look for ways to attack them.

Take what your opponent gives you. As you gain one type of advantage and apply pressure to weak points, your opponent’s choices become more limited and new weaknesses and pressure points usually appear.

Like in the opening and the endgame, don’t create weaknesses in your position for your opponent to attack.

Keep your king safe. Avoid pushing pawns in front of your king especially in open or semi-open positions as this exposes him to attack.

Consider both attacking and defending strategies.

Carefully keep in mind the types of advantages and try to make gains in as many as you can when creating your middlegame plan.

King Safety – Keep your king safe and look for ways to weaken and attack your opponent's king.

Material – Look for ways to win material. Don't allow your opponent to win material.

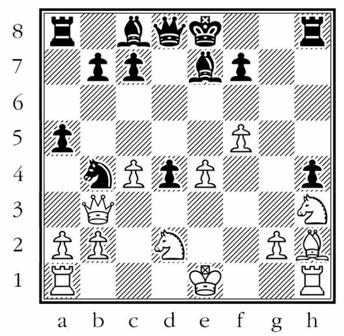
Piece Activity – Look to increase the mobility of your pieces and limit the mobility of your opponent's pieces. Trade your weak pieces for stronger ones.

Space – Gain space by advancing your pawns and play on the part of the board where you have more space and freedom for your pieces. Limit your opponent's space.

Pawn Structure – Strengthen your pawn structure. Weaken your opponent's structure with the goal of winning the weak pawns or forcing more valuable pieces to protect them.

Prevent your opponent from castling

When your opponent hasn't castled, try to prevent him from castling since his king is generally an easier target in the center of the board because he can be attacked from the center or either side.



Position after 20.Nh3
Black to move

White's king is exposed in the center and he has the option of castling on either side.

Black's knight would like to check White's king on d3 or fork the king and rook on c2. Black's queen is overworked, defending both squares.

To prevent White from castling, Black plays **20…a4** attacking White's queen.

21.Qd1 is the only safe queen move that prevents the knight fork.

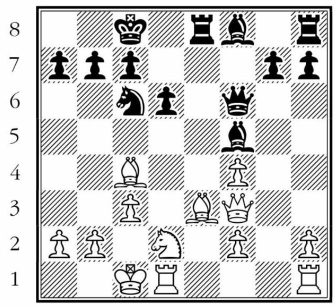
Black can then play **21…Nd3+**.

White is not allowed to castle to escape check and once his king moves, he no longer has the right to castle. Out in the open and closer to the center, he will be an easier target for Black's pieces to attack.

Attack king weaknesses and activate pieces

If there are weaknesses in your opponent's king position, look for ways to attack the king with forcing moves and sacrifices.

Attacks that fail to checkmate the king often still lead to material gains.



Position after 13.0-0-0
Black to move

Black's light-squared bishop has an open diagonal near White's king because the pawn moved to c3.

Black plays **13…d5!** attacking the bishop and opening up the a3-f8 diagonal for his dark-squared bishop.

14.Bxd5 Qxc3+! 15.bxc3 Ba3 mate.

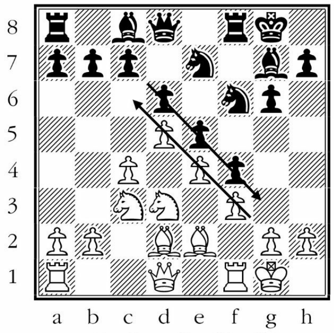
Pawn arrows and space

Try to expand and gain as much space as possible. This can be accomplished by advancing pawns. Pieces have more mobility where they have more space to operate.

The concept called a *pawn arrow* is when two or more files are blocked by opposing pawns, creating a barrier neither player can easily penetrate.

Starting with the blocked pawn closest to each player and drawing an arrow through the other blocked pawns in the pawn chain toward the opponent's side of the board determines the direction where each player has more space.

You generally want to trade pawns at the base of your opponent's pawn arrow to open up lines of attack for your other pieces.



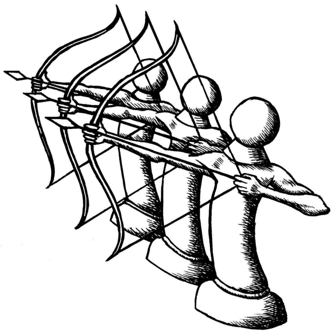
Position after 12…f4
White to move

The d-, e-, and f-files are locked up by pawns.
Black's pawn arrow points to the kingside and White's pawn arrow points toward the queenside.

White plays **13.c5** with the idea of playing 14.cxd6 (not 14.c6 where Black can lock up most of the queenside with 14…b6) and invading on the queenside.
Black plays **13…g5** with the idea of preparing the …g4 pawn push to attack and open up the kingside.
It is a race.
If Black breaks through first, he will likely checkmate

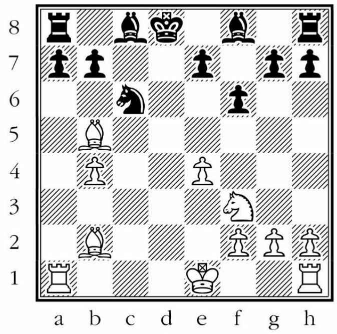
White's king.

If White breaks in on the queenside first, Black will have to defend the queenside where he has less space and piece mobility. Sending resources to defend the queenside will limit Black's attacking force on the kingside.



Limit your opponent’s space

Prevent your opponent from expanding into your territory.



Position after 11.Bxb2 (p)
Black to move

White would like to play 12.e5 expanding in the center as well as increasing the mobility of his knight and dark-squared bishop.

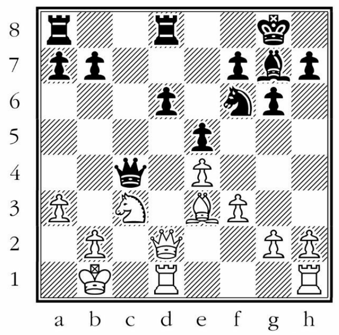
Black prevents this by playing **11…e5** which blockades White’s e-pawn and frees his dark-squared bishop.

White’s knight is now deprived of the d4 square and his dark-squared bishop is blocked on the a1-h8 diagonal.

Create and take advantage of outpost squares

Like the backward pawn itself, the square in front of a backward pawn is also weak.

A good strategy is to control this square so the weak backward pawn cannot advance and trade for one of your better pawns.



Position after 17…Qxc4 (B)
White to move

Black has a backward pawn on d6.

White does not want Black to safely push the weak pawn to d5 and exchange it for the e4 pawn or push it to d4 to create a protected passed pawn.

At the moment, if Black moved the pawn to d5, it would be attacked four times and defended three times.

To increase his control over the d5 square, White can play **18.Bg5!** pinning Black's knight to the rook and then exchange the bishop (which can never attack d5) for the knight with **19.Bxf6**.

White could then play **20.Nd5** giving the knight a strong outpost on d5, resulting in a good knight vs. bad bishop middlegame position.

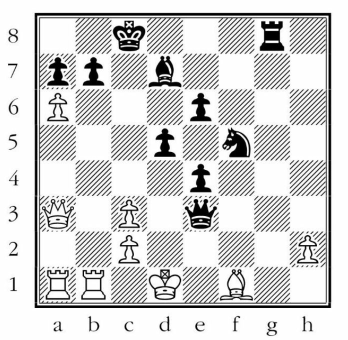
The opposite side castling theme also is present here. White's strategy is to advance his kingside pawns to attack the Black king before Black can attack White's king.

Open the position to attack; close it when defending

Using your pawns to open up the position or to close it is one of the most important strategic decisions you will make in the middlegame.

On the part of the board where you want to attack, you will want to exchange pawns and open up the position for your pieces to invade.

On a part of the board you are defending, you generally want to lock up the pawn structure so your opponent can't break in and invade your territory.



Position after 30.Kd1
Black to move

Both kings are in potential danger.

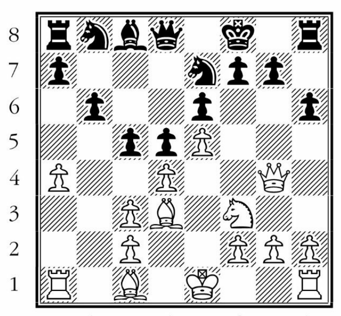
White's king is trying to run toward the queenside with the hope his other pieces can provide protection.

White threatens to capture Black's pawn on b7 and attack his king.

To slow down White's attack and buy time for his attack to succeed, Black can play **30…b6** locking up the queenside pawns and keeping the b-file closed.

Trade bad pieces for good ones

Trading your worst piece for its stronger counterpart is a good strategy because it improves your position from a piece mobility perspective.



Position after 10.Bd3
Black to move

Black plays **10…Ba6**, and after **11.0-0 Bxd3 12.cxd3** succeeds in trading his bishop which is restricted by the pawns on e6 and d5 for White's strong bishop which is aimed at Black's kingside. This also eliminates White's bishop pair.

Castling on opposite sides

When players castle on opposite sides, a good strategy is to quickly attack your opponent’s king, typically by moving up your pawns on the side of the board where the enemy king is located.

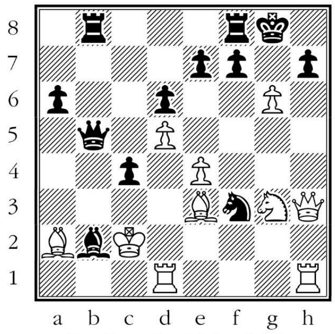
At the same time, your opponent should be attacking on the side of the board where your king is located.

The player who succeeds at mobilizing his attack to arrive at the enemy king first, gains the initiative and usually wins the game.

The second player to castle is counting on his attack arriving first. Castling on opposite sides would be a crazy thing to do if he thought his opponent’s attack would arrive quicker.

Because it is a race to attack the king, you generally don’t want to move pawns in front of your king unless it is absolutely necessary. Moving a pawn in front of your king often loses two tempi because you could have been attacking your opponent’s king with your move and since your pawn is now closer to your opponent’s side of the board, it may take him one less move to attack it and initiate a battle.

When kings are castled on the same side of the board, the players generally shouldn’t push the pawns in front of their king toward their opponent’s king because they expose their king in the process. If this happens, the strategy for the opponent is to counterattack in the center.

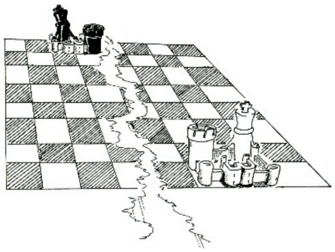


Position after 23.hxg6 (p)
Black to move

Both players are racing to be the first to arrive at their opponent’s king.

White threatens 24.Qxh7 mate. If 23…Rfc8, then 24.Qxh7+ Kf8 25.Qxf7 mate.

White won’t have time to accomplish this because Black can force checkmate first by playing **23…Qa4+ 24.Kb1 Be5+ 25.Kc1** 25.Bb3 Qxb3+ 26.Kc1 Qb2 mate. **25…Qa3+ 26.Kc2 Qb2 mate.**



Tips on Middlegame Strategy

- Be careful moving pieces into your opponent's territory, especially if your opponent has more pieces nearby on that part of the board.

- Play for a superior pawn structure and plan ahead for the endgame.

- Pawns open and close the position. Open the position where you are attacking, close the position where you have weaknesses and need to defend.

- Look for outpost squares for knights. Occupy weak squares.

- Bishops like open diagonals. Opposite-colored bishops favor the attacking player in the middlegame. When possible, preserve your bishop pair.

- Seize open files with rooks. Rooks like to be connected on open files. If your opponent grabs an open file with a rook, opposing it on the file can neutralize it.

- Active piece play is often worth a pawn or two. Grabbing pawns risks losing precious time. If you can safely grab a pawn without losing too much time, then go ahead and take it because an extra pawn is often enough to win the game.

- Always have a reason for trading pieces. Don't trade active pieces for passive pieces.

- If you are ahead in material, it is generally a good plan to exchange pieces. This helps simplify the position to a winning endgame.

- When attacking your opponent's king, generally avoid exchanging pieces since this reduces the strength of your attack. Try to exchange pieces when you are defending as this will reduce the force of your opponent’s attack.

- Protect your weaknesses. Be careful when your pieces are unprotected since your opponent can gain time attacking them.

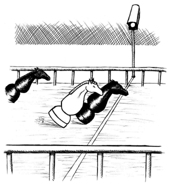
- If you are clearly worse; don’t slowly get squeezed. It is often best to give yourself a practical chance to win by throwing everything you can at your opponent’s king.

- Always have a plan. Don’t push pawns when you can’t think of anything else to do. Don’t sacrifice without good reason.

- If you don’t understand why your opponent sacrificed a piece, take it.

- If your opponent attacks on the flank, counterattack in the center.

Endgame Strategy



The endgame is the final phase of the game. If you make a mistake here, you may not have enough time to recover.

Because most of the pieces have been captured and there are fewer legal moves in the endgame, sometimes you can use the process of elimination to determine the best move.

An important decision that influences your endgame strategy is whether you are trying to win or draw. You would like to win, but if your position is worse, drawing is better than losing. Other cases where draws may be acceptable are if your opponent is a much stronger player than you or if all you need is a draw to win a tournament.

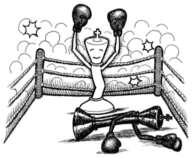
A question you should be constantly asking yourself in this phase of the game is, “If all of the pieces are traded off, who wins the king and pawn endgame?”

When you are ahead in material in the endgame, you generally want to trade pieces, not pawns, to simplify the game.

If you are behind in material, you generally want to trade pawns, with the goal of eliminating all of your opponent’s pawns (future queens) and leaving him with only a minor piece, which is insufficient mating material.

Also, when you are losing, you want to keep pieces on the board to create complications for your opponent and make it harder for him to win. Don’t trade down into a losing king and pawn endgame. Give your opponent a chance to make a mistake.

Basic Checkmates

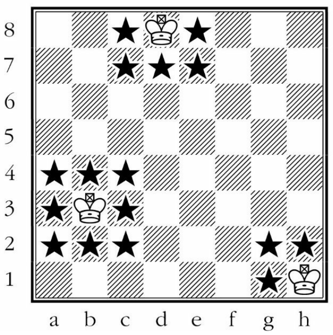


The most basic checkmate that every chess player should learn how to execute is a king and queen vs. a king.

Often the queen is not the original queen from the start of the game, but a promoted pawn.

A king and a rook also have enough power to checkmate a king.

A king and one minor piece do not have enough power to checkmate, resulting in a draw by insufficient mating material.



To checkmate the king, you have to check him and take away all his flight squares.

In order to checkmate the king in the center of the board, the attacker has to attack eight flight squares plus the square the king is on for a total of nine squares.

To checkmate on the edge of the board, the attacker must attack five flight squares plus the square the king is on for a total of six squares.

The attacker only has to attack four squares to checkmate the king in the corner.

The king can only be checkmated on the edge or in the corner of the board when facing a king and queen because they do not have enough power to eliminate nine squares.

Therefore, the player with the queen must first force the opposing king against the edge of the board or into the corner.

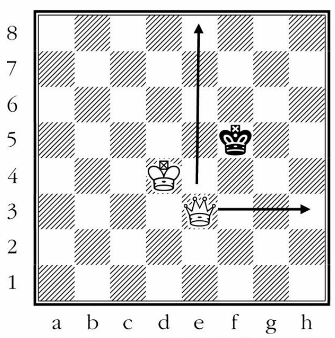
There are several ways to do this.

The method shown here works for both the king and queen vs. king and king and rook vs. king situations.

It will take both the king and queen to checkmate the king.

White should first form a “box” around Black’s king with his queen and then proceed to shrink the box.

To avoid a draw, White must be careful to not blunder away his queen and avoid stalemating the king once he is close to checkmate.



Position after 46.Qe3 (from c1)
Black to move

The arrows show the edges of the box.

Note that the arrows only define the outer edge of the box, not the diagonal from the queen inside the box.

Black plays **46...Kf6** in order to keep his king as close to the center as possible.

47.Qe5+ Kg6.

White looks first to shrink the box with 48.Qf5+, but this leaves the queen unprotected.

White anticipates Black’s next move and moves his king closer with **48.Kd5**.

48…Kf7 Trying to avoid moving against the edge of the board.

49.Qe6+ Kg7 50.Ke5 Kf8.

Now that Black’s king is up against the edge of the board, White should trap him there with the queen by playing **51.Qd7**.

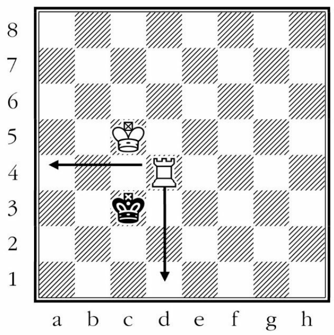
Pinning the opponent’s king against the edge of the board with the queen is good form because it then allows your king to move toward him without risking stalemate. Note that 51.Kf6? would be stalemate.

51…Kg8 52.Kf6 Kf8 53.Qf7 mate (White could also play 53.Qc8 mate or 53.Qd8 mate.) If Black instead played 52…Kh8, White could play 53.Qg7 mate.

Checkmating with a king and rook is similar to checkmating with a king and queen.

When shrinking the box, the king will spend some time defending the rook because the defending king can approach the rook diagonally.

Note that the risk of stalemate is higher with a queen than a rook because of the queen's ability to control diagonals.



Position after 50…Kc3
White to move

White doesn't want to move the rook because it opens up the box.

White wastes a move with **51.Kd5**, keeping the edges of the box unchanged.

Black has to retreat his king and plays **51…Kc2**.

White can't safely shrink the box with 52.Rd3 because the rook would be undefended, so he plays **52.Kc4**.

52…Kb2 53.Rd3 Kc2 54.Kd4 Kb2 55.Rc3 Shrinking the box takes time if the defender doesn't voluntarily move his king to the edge of the board.

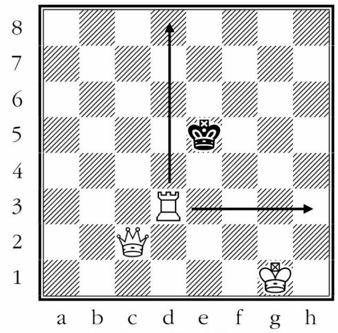
55…Kb1 56.Kd3 Kb2 57.Kd2 Kb1 58.Rc2 Pinning the king against the edge of the board.

58…Ka1 59.Kc3 Bringing the king closer to Black's king.

59…Kb1 60.Kb3 Ka1 61.Rc1 mate.

Remember that when you are close to checkmate, you are also close to stalemate. Always make sure you that are thinking a couple moves ahead and that your opponent's king has a square to move to when you don't put him in check.

When the attacking player checkmates by moving a queen and rook to alternating files or ranks, it is called queen and rook roller mate.



Position after 53…Ke5
White to move

White will take turns moving the queen and rook to push Black's king to the edge of the board to checkmate him.

White's rook forms the edges of the box.

White wins with **54.Qe2+ Kf4 55.Rf3+ Kg4 56.Qg2+ Kh4 57.Rh3 mate**.

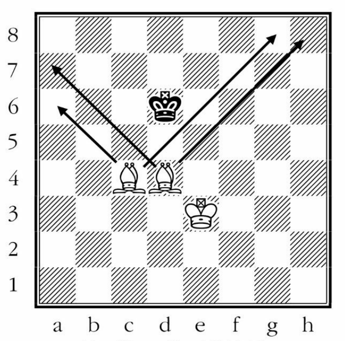
This method also works with two queens or two rooks.

White's king is not required to help out.

Two bishops have the power to checkmate a king. This combination of pieces doesn't happen very often, but the method is instructional.

Unlike rooks that form a rectangular box, the bishops form a diagonal box.

When the bishops are side by side, they box in the opponent's king on the diagonals.

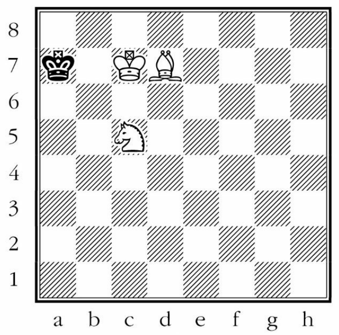


Position after 55.Bd4
Black to move

White will move his king up to help the bishops force Black's king into one of the corners.
55…Kc6 56.Ke4 Kd6 57.Bd5 Kd7 58.Bc5 Kc7 59.Ke5 Kd7 60.Bd6 Kd8 Black's king is against the edge of the board. White now forces him into the corner closer to his king to checkmate him.
61.Be6 Ke8 62.Kf6 Kd8 63.Be5 Ke8 64.Bc7 Kf8 65.Bd7 Kg8 66.Kg6 Kf8 67.Bd6+ Kg8 68.Be6+ Kh8 69.Be5 mate. The final bishop moves are a bishop and bishop roller mate, a similar concept to a queen and rook roller mate.

A bishop and knight have the ability to checkmate a king. This checkmate is complicated, but also quite rare.

Mate can only be forced in the corner of the color of the bishop.



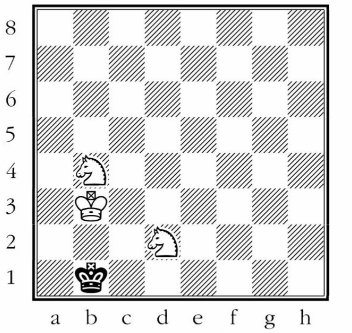
Position after 77.Kc7
Black to move

In this position, White has a light-squared bishop and can checkmate Black's king in the a8 or h1 corner of the board. As Black's king is forced to the edge of the board, he will try to run toward the dark-squared a1 or h8 corner.
White then has the difficult task of forcing the king toward the light-squared corner of either h1 or a8 without allowing him to escape back into the center or one of the dark-squared corners.

With Black's king near the a8 corner, White can force checkmate after **77…Ka8 78.Kb6 Kb8 79.Na6+ Ka8 80.Bc6 mate**.

It is possible to checkmate with two knights, but the defender has to blunder by voluntarily moving his king into the corner.

The result of the game is usually a draw since White does not have enough material to force checkmate.



Position after 64.Ne2+
Black to move

Black's best move is to avoid the corner and play **64…Kc1**.
64…Ka1?? 65.Nc2 mate.

With two knights, White cannot force Black's king into the corner to checkmate him.

Promoting a pawn

A king and a pawn are sufficient mating material to win the game, but first the pawn must promote to a queen or rook.

Promoting a pawn is a big deal; a queen coming back onto the board usually ends the game quickly because of the huge material imbalance that suddenly exists.

If the defender can’t stop the pawn from promoting, he will often have to give up a piece for it. This normally gives the player trying to promote the pawn a significant lead in material, but not as much of one had the new queen survived.

Passed pawns are the most dangerous pawns because a pawn has to become passed before it can promote.

An important concept to keep in mind is that positions with symmetrical pawn structures, where pawns on each file have a counterpart standing directly in their path, tend to be more drawish than those with asymmetrical structures.

Asymmetrical pawn structures give both players greater winning and losing chances because both players have greater odds of creating a passed pawn.

It is often better to have a far advanced pawn in the endgame than an extra pawn.

Square of the pawn

When a passed pawn can advance safely up the board and promote, that player usually wins the game.

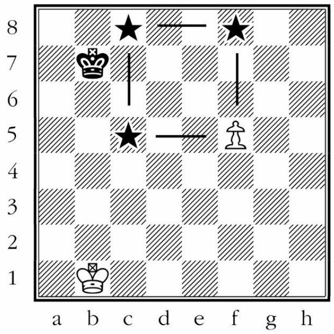
The *square of the pawn* is the chess concept that applies to the common occurrence of a race between the defending king and a passed pawn to the promotion square.

Kings and pawns move at the same speed.

The square of the pawn is an imaginary square that the defending king must move into in order to win the race with a passed pawn that is trying to promote. The square is defined on the side of the pawn where the defending king is located.

Note that this is simply a one-on-one race between the defending king and that pawn and does not apply when the attacking king is close enough to support the pawn.

The four corners of the square of the pawn are: the square the pawn is currently resting on, the promotion square, the square on the diagonal drawn to the eighth rank from the pawn's current position on the side of the pawn where the defending king is located, and the square on the board diagonally opposite the promotion square that completes the imaginary square.

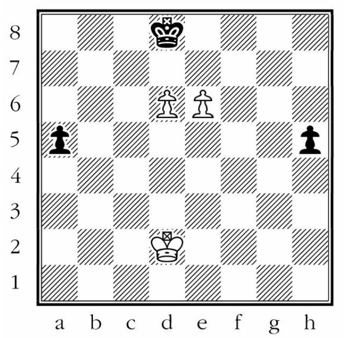


Position after 51…Kb7
White to move

Three corners of the square of the pawn, not including the f5

square that pawn is currently on, are marked with stars.
If the Black king can get into the square, he can capture the pawn and draw the game.

With White to move, he plays **52.f6**, shrinking the square. The new corners of the square of the pawn are f6, f8, d8, and d6.
Black can play **52…Kc7**, but he can’t make up enough time to catch the pawn. White will win the race, promote the pawn to a queen, and then checkmate Black with his king and queen.
If White erroneously moved his king with 52.Kc2?, Black can play 52…Kc6, 52…Kc7, or 52…Kc8, moving his king into the square of the passed pawn. Black’s king can then catch the pawn and draw the game by insufficient mating material.



Position after 46.d6
Black to move

The pawn structure is asymmetrical. Black has isolated passed pawns on a5 and h5, while White has two connected passed pawns on d6 and e6.

Both kings are in the square of the other player's passed pawns.

White's pawns are further up the board, but his king is too far away to help them.

Black can play **46…h4**, shrinking the square of the h-pawn.

White moves his king back into the square by playing **47.Ke2**.

After 47.e7+ Kd7, Black cannot capture the d6 pawn because his king leaves the square of the e7 pawn. But White cannot safely advance his center pawns any further without his king's help.

Because White's king is on edge of the square of both Black pawns, Black could push either pawn and White's king has to decide which pawn to chase.

One of Black's pawns will promote.

Outside passed pawn

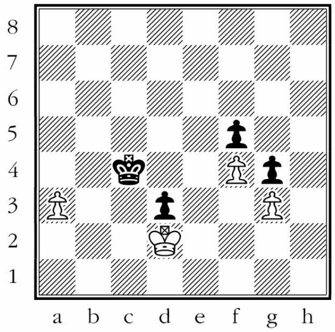
An extension of the square of the pawn concept is the outside passed pawn.

The outside passed pawn is the passed pawn furthest away from the other pawns where the main battle will eventually take place.

The defending king has to stay in the square of the outside passed pawn and eventually capture it so the pawn doesn't promote.

The further the outside passed pawn is away from the other pawns, the longer it takes the king to catch it and return to the other side of the board.

Outside passed pawns are often used as decoys.



Position after 57…Kc4
White to move

The kingside pawns are locked up and both players have an isolated passed pawn on the queenside.

White has a winning position because he has the outside passed pawn on a3 and Black's king has to move all the way to the a-file to capture it before returning to the kingside.

White's king has a shorter distance to the kingside after he captures the d3 pawn.

Black's king has the responsibility to protect his d-pawn as well as stop White's a-pawn.

White plays **58.a4**.

Black can't advance his d-pawn and his king must stop White's pawn.

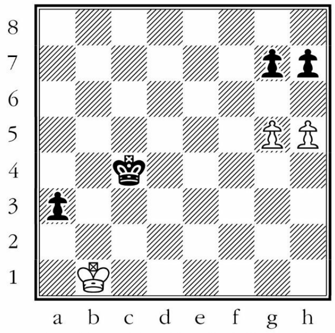
58…Kb4 59.Kxd3 Pushing his a-pawn with 59.a5 loses a tempo because Black's king has to travel to the a-file to capture the pawn no matter which square the pawn is on. White is still winning the position after 59.a5, but in some positions this tempo could make a difference in the outcome of the game.

59…Kxa4 60.Kd4 Kb4 61.Ke5 and White will win Black's kingside pawns.

Creating a passed pawn

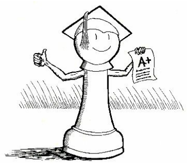
Since your opponent will not help you create passed pawns, it is something you normally have to do on your own.

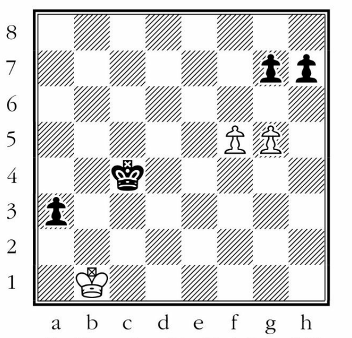
It is harder to create a passed pawn in a symmetrical pawn structure, as opposed to an asymmetrical pawn structure, because there is an opponent's pawn directly blocking the path of each pawn.



Position after 43…Kc4 (from b3)
White to move

Black has an outside passed pawn on a3 and the kingside pawn structure is symmetrical.
White would like to create a passed pawn on the kingside before Black's king arrives and captures the pawns.
Black can lock up the pawns after 44.h6 g6 or 44.g6 h6 and win White's pawns with his king because White's king has to capture the a3 pawn before heading to the kingside.

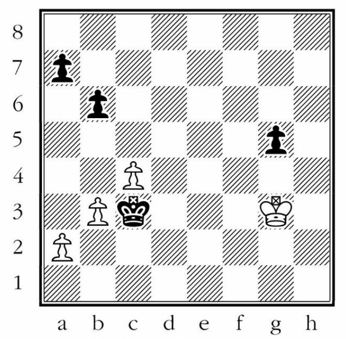




Position after 43…Kc4 (from b3)
White to move

Pretend White’s h5 pawn is now on f5.
White can create a passed pawn in this asymmetrical kingside pawn structure by pushing his unopposed f-pawn with **44.f6**. If he plays 44.g6?, Black can play 44…hxg6 and prevent White from creating a passed pawn.
After **44…gxf6 45.gxf6** White will promote his f-pawn quickly and win the game since he is only two squares away from f8 and Black’s king is outside the square of the pawn.

Black has an outside passed g-pawn and White has a pawn majority on the queenside.



Position after 47.Kg3
Black to move

If Black tries to win the base pawn on a2 with 47…Kb2?, White can play 48.b4 and create a passed pawn on the next move with 49.c5 that Black's king cannot catch.

Winning for Black is **47…a5!**

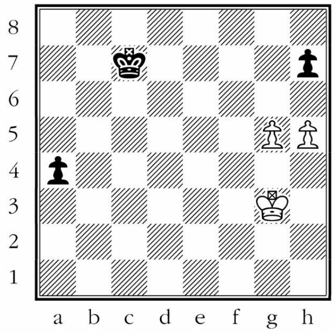
This prevents White's b4 pawn push, giving Black time to win White's pawns after **48.Kg4 Kb2 49.Kxg5 Kxa2 50.Kf4 Kxb3 51.Ke4 Kxc4**.

Counting races

Accurately counting out king and pawn races is critical in the endgame, as demonstrated by the square of the pawn concept.

You should always be on the lookout for ways to gain a tempo at the end of a pawn race, like when a pawn promotes with check, and look to see if the pieces are positioned for tactics such as pins, forks, or skewers after a promotion occurs.

Look all the possible pawn moves for both players on each move.



Position after 61…a4
White to move

Both players need to carefully count out the race to promote the pawns.

Black wins the game if White plays 62.h6 a3 63.g6 a2 64.gxh7 a1=Q attacking the h8 promotion square. If White played 64.g7, he gets skewered after 64…a1=Q 65.g8=Q Qg1+.

White wins by playing **62.g6**.

If Black plays 62…h6, White can play 63.g7 a3 64.g8=Q, preventing 64…a2.

Black's other option is **62…hxg6**.

If White plays 63.hxg6, then 63…a3 64.g7 a2 65.g8=Q a1=Q. White promoted first, but cannot skewer Black's king and queen. With correct play, the game should end in a draw.

Better for White is **63.h6!**
After **63…a3 64.h7 a2 65.h8=Q**, Black cannot safely promote on a1, leaving White with a winning position.

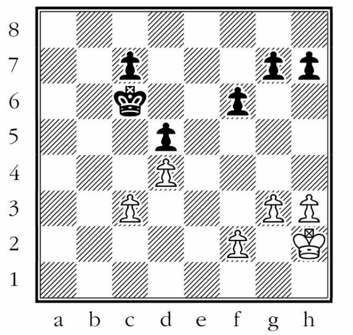
Centralizing the king

A fundamental endgame strategy is to move the king toward the center of the board where he can quickly reach any part of the board.

The king is a very strong piece in this phase of the game.

Generally, it is safe for the king to move toward the center after the opponent's queen and half his rooks, bishops, and knights are captured.

Also, moving toward the center avoids getting the king trapped on the edge of the board, as in back rank mate positions.

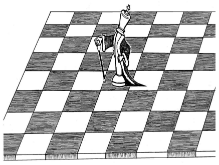


Position after 44…Kc6
White to move

Black's king was first to start marching toward the center and is close to White's queenside pawns.

White plays **45.Kg2** moving his king toward the center.

Black's king wins White's c3 pawn after **45…Kb5 46.Kf3 Kc4**.

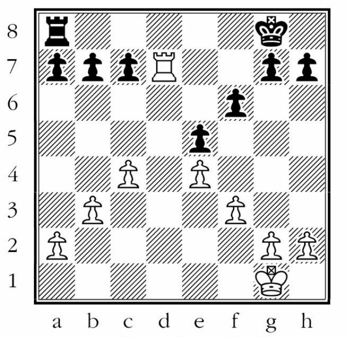


Cutting off your opponent’s king

Preventing your opponent’s king from moving toward the center is as important as centralizing your king.

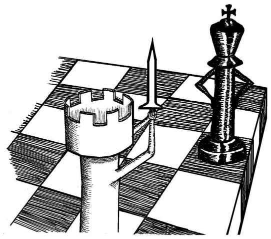
One of the endgame goals for a rook is to reach the 7th rank.

There are usually pawns to attack on the 7th rank and the rook often prevents the defender’s king from leaving his back rank.



Position after 36.Rd7
Black to move

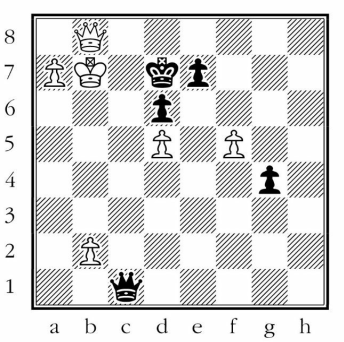
White’s rook on the 7th rank attacks the c7 pawn, forcing Black to protect it with **36…Rc8**.
White’s strategy is to centralize his king, invade Black’s territory, and try to win Black’s pawns.



Underpromotion

In most positions, pawns should promote to a queen because she is the most powerful and valuable piece.

There are rare situations when it is best to underpromote a pawn to a less valuable piece. Usually a knight is chosen because a knight's powers are different from the queen.



Position after 70…Qc1
White to move

If White promotes his pawn to queen with 71.a8=Q, Black can force a threefold repetition draw by playing 71…Qxb2+ 72.Ka6 Qa3+ 73.Kb5 Qb3+ and repeating queen checks on the a- and b- files.

White wins by underpromoting his pawn to a knight by playing **71.a8=N!** with the threat of 72.Nb6 mate.

After **71…Qxb2+**, White wins Black's queen after **72.Nb6+ Qxb6+ 73.Kxb6**.

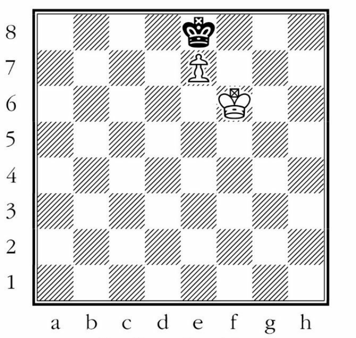
Zugzwang

Most of the time you prefer it be your move.

But there are situations in the endgame, with fewer pieces and choices remaining, when you don't want it to be your move because being forced to move results in an undesirable outcome.

The word *zugzwang* [German] means "compelled to move."

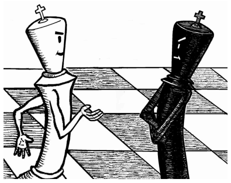
When you are in zugzwang, you are in a situation where you would prefer to pass your move to your opponent because any move you make would make your position worse.



Position after 49.e7
Black to move

Black is trying to prevent the pawn from promoting, but is forced to abandon the promotion square with **49…Kd7**, allowing White to play **50.Kf7** and promote the pawn on the next move. Black is in zugzwang.

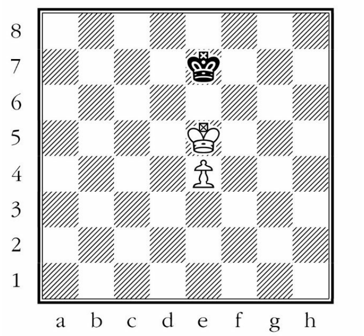
If instead it were White to move, he would be in zugzwang because moving his king to e6 to keep his pawn protected is stalemate.



Opposition

Opposition is a situation where the two kings face each other on a file (or rank) with a square between them. The player not having to move is said to "have the opposition".

The player to move is often in *zugzwang* and has to move his king, giving the opponent the opportunity to access important squares.



Position after 51.Ke5
Black to move

With Black to move, White would have the opposition.
51…Kd7 52.Kf6 Note that White's king moves to the file on the other side of the e-file than Black's king.
After **52…Ke8 53.Ke6 Kf8 54.Kd7 Kf7 55.e5**, White can safely promote the pawn.

If instead it were White to move, Black would have the opposition.
White cannot make progress after **52.Kf5 Kf7 53.Ke5 Ke7 54.Kd5 Kd7**, as Black's king keeps the opposition by moving the same direction as White's king.
After **55.e5 Ke7 56.e6 Ke8 57.Kd6 Kd8**, Black takes the opposition and draws because **58.e7+ Ke8 59.Ke6** is stalemate.

Tips on Endgame Strategy

- Determine if you are playing for a win or for a draw. Also, try to figure out what outcome your opponent is playing for and play accordingly.
- Checkmate your opponent when the opportunity arises; you don’t need to capture all his pieces or promote too many pawns to queens and risk stalemate. Normally two queens are more than enough to win the game.
- Just because a king can’t move doesn’t mean it is a stalemate since other pieces or pawns may be able to move. It also doesn’t mean it is checkmate because maybe the opponent can interpose or capture the checking piece.
- When you find a variation that draws, spend time looking for a variation that wins.
- When you obtain a winning endgame position, keep in mind that your opponent is desperate and will try for complications and cheapos to make your job more difficult.
- Don’t be overconfident. The player who makes the last mistake often loses the game.
- Don’t resign! Once you resign, you lost and cannot come back. Your opponent could stalemate you or make a terrible blunder if the game is still in progress. Make your opponent prove that he knows how to win the game.
- Look for opportunities to zugzwang your opponent.
- When your opponent is low on time and you are not, don’t rush your moves and try to win on time; be patient and use your time efficiently. Try to complicate the position to increase the odds that he might make a mistake.

- When you are ahead in material, look to trade pieces and simplify the position and try to avoid exchanging pawns which have the potential to become queens in the future.

- When you are behind in material, complicate the position and make it more difficult for your opponent to win and try to eliminate all your opponent's pawns with the goal of leaving him with insufficient mating material of a knight or bishop.

- Calculate who has the advantage in the king and pawn ending before trading pieces.

- Analyze forcing moves and exchange lines first.

- Don't underestimate active piece play.

- Continuously be aware of how both you and your opponent can make progress.

- Small advantages often add up to be large enough to win the game.

- Don't check your opponent's king for no reason.

- Don't waste moves; every tempo in the endgame may be critical.

- You should generally advance on the side of the board where you have more pawns with the goal of creating a passed pawn.

- Stop your opponent's passed pawns and try to prevent him from creating them.

- Since you can't undo a pawn move, don't make pawn moves that create weaknesses.

- Play for superior pawn structures. Don't trade strong pawns for your opponent's weak pawns. Carefully examine all pawn choices: moving, capturing, and sitting for both players.

- Mobilize a pawn majority by typically pushing the unopposed pawn first. Don't let your opponent's pawn minority block your pawn majority.

- It is easier to draw against rook pawns because of stalemate possibilities in the corner.

- The player who promotes first has the advantage of the first opportunity to check the opponent's king and trade or win material.

- Promoting a pawn with check often gains an important tempo that can win the game.

- Centralize your king! He is a valuable fighting piece in the endgame once it is safe for him to move toward the center. This is a critical concept to understand in order to have success in the endgame.

- Kings are good blockaders. As a defensive piece, it is important that the king stay in the square of enemy pawns.

- As an offensive piece, the king is good at capturing pawns and escorting friendly pawns to their promotion squares.

- Opposite-colored bishops tend to give the defender good drawing chances because of the ability to blockade passed pawns on the color of his bishop in an attempt to prevent a promotion.

- A king, bishop, and rook pawn vs. king is a draw if the bishop is not on the same color of the pawn's promotion square and the defending king can get in front of the pawn. He can eventually hide in the corner on the promotion square where he can be stalemated, but not checkmated.

- Rooks generally belong behind passed pawns of either player.
- In rook and pawn endgames, you should strive to attain a better king position, a more active rook, and a better pawn structure that you can convert to a material advantage or use to promote a pawn.
- In queen endings, look for perpetual checks or threefold repetition draws from the player who is behind.

APPENDIX – COMMON CHESS MISTAKES

MENU
PAWN + PEPPERONI PIZZA
BISHOP BANANA SPLIT
ROOK RAVIOLI
CHECKMATE CHEESECAKE
KING CRAB

Most mistakes are made by not following general chess principles.

Below is a list of general mistakes made during the game and then during each specific phase of the game.

You will see items that you need to work on and others you are doing well.

It is a good idea to record and study your games to see what mistakes you are making that need to be corrected.

General Mistakes

Here are some common mistakes that overlap all three phases of the game:

- **Moving too quickly** – Take your time, pick up clues, and be observant, it’s not a race.
- **“Touchy-feely fingers”** – Don’t reach your hand until you are sure of your move.
- **Overlooking free stuff** – Leaving pieces unguarded or moving them to a square where they can be immediately captured. This is usually caused by moving too fast. If you think you are getting something for free, check to make sure it isn’t a trap.
- **Not asking, “What is he threatening?”** – Or not paying attention to what your opponent is doing. Pretend you are him and ask what you would you do in his situation.
- **Not counting how many time pieces are attacked and defended** – If you don’t take time to count the number or attackers and defenders, you will often lose material and not gain material offered by your opponent.
- **Giving a piece too many defensive responsibilities** – Make sure your pieces are well-protected so they aren’t overworked.
- **Recapturing automatically with pawns** – When

recapturing, pawns change files which can double or isolate your pawns and hurt your pawn structure. Always have a reason for deciding what piece to recapture with when you have multiple options.

- **Not recapturing pieces at all** – Pay attention to what your opponent captures.
- **Not caring about losing pawns** – Usually it is better to lose a pawn than a piece, but pawns can turn into queens in the endgame to win the game.
- **Ignoring pawn structure** – Create a good pawn structure for yourself and try to wreck your opponent's pawn structure.
- **Making weak pawn moves** – You can't move pawns backwards to cover up weaknesses created by moving them prematurely.
- **Focusing on only one part of the board** – Take time to look at the entire board.
- **Checking the king for no reason** – Checks are forcing moves and can be useful, but the object of the game is checkmate, not check. Always have a reason for each move.
- **Trading pieces without considering other moves** – You should always have a reason for exchanging pieces. You generally want to trade pieces when you are ahead in material, being attacked, or have less space. Don't trade good pieces for bad ones. Trading pieces for the wrong reason can help your opponent.
- **Grabbing pawns** – When you win material by grabbing a pawn, make sure your piece doesn't get trapped or it takes too much time, which can potentially give your opponent a piece activity advantage.
- **Playing for "cheapos"** – Always assume your opponent will make the best move.
- **Playing passively** – Don't wait for your opponent to gain the initiative. Be aggressive when possible.
- **Letting your guard down (**and **overconfidence)** – The player who makes the last mistake often loses the game.

- **Not having a plan** – Don’t make your move until you pick up all the clues in the position, identify your strengths and weaknesses, and figure out what your overall strategy is. Don’t waste moves. Spend time to figure out your opponent’s plan.
- **Not taking time to pick up clues and look at the big picture** – Understand what is going on before looking at individual moves. When you discover something important, don’t forget it.
- **Not dreaming** – Dream, then make your dream come true. If your dream doesn’t work, look for a way to make it work.
- **Not having a good reason for breaking a general chess principle** – Principles are general guidelines; follow them unless there is a valid reason to break them.
- **Not looking far enough ahead** – Look as deep into the position as you can. If you can see two moves ahead, try to look three moves ahead.
- **Sacrificing pieces** – Make sure the loss of material in a sacrifice is justified.
- **Not invading when possible** – Increase your space and control of the board when possible.
- **Not noticing when pieces are on the same line** – Tactics usually occur when pieces are lined up on files, ranks or diagonals.
- **Not paying attention to key squares** – Squares can be as important as pieces.
- **Putting pieces on bad squares** – Try to place all your pieces are on good squares where they have mobility.
- **Creating targets for your opponent to attack** – Don’t create weaknesses in your position that your opponent can take advantage of.
- **Chasing your opponent’s pieces to better squares** – Take time to figure out where the best square is for your opponent’s pieces and don’t chase his pieces to those squares.

- **Getting the wrong combination of bishops and knights** – Minor piece imbalances (bishop vs. knight) are common. Bishops like open positions; knights prefer closed positions with more pawns on the board. Neglecting the power of the bishop pair falls into this category. Aim to have the best combination of minor pieces.

Opening Mistakes

- **Opening on the edge of the board** – Control the center of the board; don’t allow your opponent to claim the center. Controlling the center equates to gaining more space, which can translate to better piece activity. Get at least one pawn into the center.
- **Pushing too many pawns** – Moving non-center pawns is often a waste of time, unless you plan to fianchetto a bishop or have some other valid reason to move the pawn. Instead develop your knights and bishops quickly.
- **Not developing pieces** – Your bishops and knights are your main fighters at the start of the game; get them developed quickly and efficiently. Piece activity is extremely important throughout the game, and that starts in the opening.
- **Placing knights on the rim** – Knights are slow-moving pieces and cannot attack the center or the other side of the board when they are on the rim or edge of the board.
- **Blocking bishops with pawns** – Open diagonals for your bishops and develop them outside pawn chains. Don’t block your bishops with your own pawns.
- **Moving a bishop to a3, a6, h3, or h6** – Fianchettoed bishops should generally be placed on the longest diagonal possible: b2, b7, g2, or g7. If developed to a3, a6, h3, or h6, the bishop is in line with the opponent’s undeveloped bishop and could be vulnerable to attack. Try to avoid trading a fianchettoed bishop in front of your castled king since this weakens squares near the king on the color of the bishop.
- **Not castling quickly** – Castle early. Castling gets your king out of the center and develops a rook and is the only time you can move two pieces in one turn. If you wait too long to castle, your opponent may prevent you from castling. Make sure your king and the weak f2 square (for White) and f7 square (for Black) are protected.
- **Moving the king when in check, not interposing** – You can

escape check by capturing the checking piece, interposing a piece, or moving the king. Normally you cannot capture the checking piece (usually a bishop in the opening), but you can interpose. Once you move the king, you give up the right to castle.

- **Moving pawns in front of a castled king** – Don't expose your king and give your opponent and easy target to attack.
- **Bringing out the queen too early** – She is worth nine pawns and opposing knights, bishops, and pawns would love to trade for her. If she comes out early, you may lose her if you are not careful or lose time as your opponent chases her around or traps her.
- **Retreating the queen to her original square** – If your queen comes out early, you don't always have to retreat her to her home square. If you can, move her to a square where she is developed, but not where your opponent can easily attack her.
- **Copying your opponent's moves when playing Black** – This may be fun because it annoys your opponent, but the position will be symmetrical, which means that your opponent gets the first opportunity to attack you from an identical position.

Middlegame Mistakes

- **Ignoring uncompleted opening goals** – If you haven't castled or developed all your pieces in the opening, it is important to do so quickly.
- **Creating weak squares around your king (pushing pawns in front of your king)** –Just like in the opening, don't expose your king and make him a target for your opponent to attack.
- **Trading pieces and heading to an endgame when you have an advantage in the middlegame** – Have a reason for trading pieces. If you have an advantage in the middlegame, don't automatically trade and go into the endgame. For example, if you have more pawns in the center and your opponent has more on the edge of the board, you may have a middlegame advantage because you have better control of the center and he may have an endgame advantage with an outside passed pawn.
- **Opening the position (or closing it) at the wrong time** – Open the position if you have the better placed pieces for an attack. Close it if your opponent's pieces are poised to invade. Open lines of attack on your opponent's king; close the position in front of your king so he is safe from your opponent's attack.
- **Attacking with only a few pieces** – Attack with all of your pieces if you can, not just one or two of them.
- **Gobbling up material instead of checkmating** – When you have the chance to attack an unprotected king, look for checkmates. Checkmate is the object of the game, not taking all of your opponent's pieces. By going for checkmate, you can end the game quicker and reduce the chances of making a mistake, like later stalemating your opponent's king if you take all his material before trying to checkmate him.
- **Trying to promote pawns too soon** – Usually you should wait until the endgame to try to promote your pawns. In the

middlegame, your opponent usually has too many pieces left on the board that will be able to stop passed pawns.

Endgame Mistakes

- **Failing to centralize your king** – The king is a powerful piece in the endgame. He is a slow-moving piece that is best placed in the center of the board in the endgame, where he can quickly move to any part of the board.
- **Not pushing passed pawns** – There is an old saying, “Passed pawns must be pushed.” In the endgame, this is usually true, since this is the phase of the game when pawns typically promote. Keep in mind that the further a pawn moves into the opponent’s territory, more danger exists for both players. Don’t push your passed pawns to their death.
- **Not stopping your opponent’s passed pawns** – Try to stop your opponent’s passed pawns. Passed pawns promoting into queens is a huge event in the game and one of the main goals in the endgame. Carefully count pawn races as they move toward the promotion square.
- **Trading your strong pawns for your opponent’s weak pawns** – Win your opponent’s weak pawns. Like any other possible piece exchanges, try to get the relatively stronger piece in the trade.
- **Trading pawns where your last pawn is a rook pawn** – It is usually easier for the defender to draw against a rook pawn because of stalemate possibilities that can occur in the corner of the board.
- **Trading pieces when you have a losing position** – When you are losing, complicate the position and make it more difficult for your opponent.
- **Getting too many queens** – You rarely need more than two queens; the object of the game is checkmate, not to get as many queens as you can. The risk of stalemate greatly increases when you have extra queens.
- **Stalemating your opponent** – If your opponent only has a king left on the board, stalemate and checkmate are similar. The difference is whether or not the king is in check. Look

more than half a move ahead so you won’t accidentally stalemate your opponent’s king. While considering your move, ask yourself how your opponent will respond. If the answer is, he has no legal moves (and he is not in check), look for a different move.

- **Not paying attention to who is happy with a draw** – Know who is trying to win and who is behind, hoping for a draw. Play accordingly.
- **Repeating a position three times when ahead** – Don’t repeat the position three times when you are trying to win.
- **Resigning** – When you resign, the game is over and you lose. Playing on still gives you a small chance that your opponent will blunder or stalemate you. If you are hopelessly lost, just play quickly. Speeding up the pace of the game gives you a greater chance that your opponent will also move faster and blunder.

GLOSSARY

absolute pin when a piece is pinned to the king and cannot move because the king would be placed in check

absolute skewer when the king is the first piece in the line of attack from a long-range piece and must get out of check

algebraic notation chess language that describes a move by naming the moving piece and the square it moves to

analog clock a chess clock with a traditional clock face with hands and a flag which falls at the top of the hour to indicates a player has run out of time

artificially castling see castling by hand

asymmetrical pawn structure a pawn structure where the pawns are not symmetrical, when one player has a pawn on a file where the opponent does not (also see half-open file)

attacker a piece that attacks an opposing piece

back rank another name for the first rank, the rank closest to the player behind the pawns in the game's starting position

back rank mate a checkmate that occurs when the king is attacked on the back rank by a queen or rook and his escape is blocked by his own pawns or pieces

backward pawn a typically weak base pawn on a half-open file that may be easily attacked by the opponent's pieces, especially the rooks

bad bishop a weak bishop usually blocked by its own pawns, limiting its mobility

base pawn the pawn in a pawn chain that is closest to the player and has no pawn to protect it

bishop (symbol – B) a minor piece worth three pawns that moves diagonally in any direction until it runs into another piece or the edge of the board

bishop pair the advantage of having both bishops, typically against a bishop and knight or two knights; worth about half a pawn in open positions

Black player with the dark-colored pieces who moves second in the game

Black move a move by the player playing the Black pieces written in algebraic notation by giving the move number, followed by three periods, and then the move; for example 1…Nf6

breaking a pin eliminating a pin, giving the pinned piece the freedom to move

candidate moves reasonable moves that make sense without calculation; the player's main choices for their move

capture when a piece moves to a square where an opposing piece is resting and removes the opposing piece from the board

castling a special move that usually occurs in the opening where the king moves two squares away from the center with a rook moving one square past him and the only time a player can move two pieces in one turn

castling by hand a maneuver made when a king has typically lost the right to castle but can achieve a castled position in several moves by first moving the king off the back rank to allow the rook to move past him toward the center followed by the king retreating to the back rank behind his pawns

castling long castling queenside

castling short castling kingside

center the middle of the board that includes the squares d4, d5, e4, and e5

centralizing the king strategically moving the king toward the center of the board where he can join the battle, typically occurring in the endgame

cheapo a simple trap that will radically alter the result of the game if a player falls for it

check when a player's king is under attack and threatened to be captured

checkmate the end of the game which occurs when a king is put in check with no way of escaping

chess board 8 x 8 square board consisting 64 squares of alternating white and black squares where the pawns and pieces are placed

closed pawn structures a position with pawns blocking each other, thereby restricting the movement of the pieces

combination a series of moves that are played in an exact sequence to gain an advantage

counterattack an attack mounted by the player who is initially defending

cutting off the king a barrier created by a rook or queen along a file or rank where the opponent's king cannot cross because he would be moving into check

dark-squared bishop a bishop that moves on the dark squares

decoy also called attraction, where you coax an enemy piece into a trap or onto a square which allows you to create a winning combination or position

defender a piece that defends another of its own pieces

deflection a tactic where the defender is chased away from protecting a critical square

developing a piece (also called development) when a piece (knight, bishop, rook, or queen) moves off its starting square to a better square, increasing its power

diagonal a slanting row of squares whose color is the same

digital clock a chess clock with a digital face (showing numbers only, no clock hands)

discovered attack moving a piece and attacking an opponent's piece with a bishop, rook, or queen hiding behind the piece that moved

discovered check moving a piece and checking the opponent's king with a bishop, rook, or queen hiding behind the piece that moved

discovery a type of double attack where the moving piece can attack an opponent's piece or critical square, while also uncovering a threat from a long-range piece behind it

diversion diverting a piece from an important square, similar to deflection

double attack a fork or discovered attack where the moving piece also attacks an opponent's piece

double check a discovered check where the moving piece also checks the king

doubled isolated pawns two pawns lined up vertically on the same file with no pawn on a file next to them that can protect them

doubled pawns two pawns lined up vertically on the same file that have a pawn on a file next to them that can provide protection

draw a chess game ending in a tie where both players receive half a point in a tournament

draw by insufficient mating material the type of draw that occurs when both players lack the material necessary to checkmate the king

draw offer when one of the players makes a move and verbally offers a draw to the opponent

endgame the phase of the game when only a few pieces are still on the board

en passant ("in passing" in French) a special pawn capture that exists for only one move and occurs when a pawn on the fifth rank captures an opposing pawn on an adjacent file that advanced two squares forward, as if it only moved one square forward

en prise ("in take" in French) refers to a piece or pawn that can be captured

exchange an equal trade of pieces in terms of material

exchange sacrifice to voluntarily trade a rook for a bishop or a knight, also known as giving up the exchange

family fork when a king, queen, and another piece are forked

fianchetto an Italian word meaning to develop a bishop to the square directly in front of where a knight starts the game (b2, b7, g2, or g7) where the bishop is on the longest possible diagonal on the board and can attack both of the center squares of its color

50-move draw a rare type of draw where 50 moves have occurred where no pieces have been captured and no pawns have moved

files vertical columns of eight squares on the chessboard identified by a letter from a to h

flag the part of an analog chess clock that falls at the top of the hour when a player has run out of time

forcing moves a series of moves (often checks) that force a response from the opponent, keeping him from carrying out his plan

fork a common tactic that occurs when a piece or pawn attacks two or more pieces at once

free stuff another way to say hanging pieces

gaining a tempo gaining a move by creating a threat

gambit when a player sacrifices material, typically a pawn, in the opening with the hope of achieving an advantageous position

grabbing pawns a risky way to win pawns, since it takes time and gives the opponent a chance to make gains in piece activity

half-open file a file where one player has a pawn and the other player doesn’t have a pawn

hanging a piece or pawn left unguarded and exposed to capture

hole a weak square that cannot be attacked by a pawn, ideal for an opponent to occupy with a piece

“I adjust” what a player says when he wishes to center a piece on its proper square and not be forced to move it because of the “touch move” rule

illegal move moving a piece improperly or leaving the king in check after making a move

initiative having the attack and being able to dictate the direction of the game

insufficient mating material when a player does not have enough material left on the board to force checkmate

isolated passed pawn a pawn that has the weakness of being isolated but the strength of being passed

isolated pawn a weak pawn that doesn't have pawn on a file next to it that can provide protection

interpose to block or put in between

king (symbol – K) the most valuable chess piece that cannot be captured and moves one square at a time in any direction as long as that square is not attacked by an enemy piece

kingside the half of the board where the kings begin the game (the e-, f-, g-, and h-files)

kingside majority having more pawns on the kingside than the opponent

knight (symbol – N) a minor piece worth three pawns and the only piece that can jump over other pieces, moving in the shape of a capital "L"

"knight on the rim is dim" a chess rhyme describing the location of a knight poorly placed on the edge of the board

light-squared bishop a bishop that moves on the light squares

long-range pieces bishops, rooks, and queens

losing a tempo losing a move

luft A German word meaning "air", or room to breathe; moving a pawn up one square to create an escape square for a castled king to move in order to avoid a back rank mate

major pieces rooks and queens

material the sum of the values of the pieces

mating material having enough material to force checkmate

mating net the process where a king is trapped and checkmated, like caught in a net

middlegame the middle phase of the game after the pieces have been developed, usually beginning around move ten and lasting until only a few pieces remain on the board

minor pieces knights and bishops

minority attack an attack by several pawns against a larger group of pawns with the idea of weakening the larger group of pawns and opening up lines of attack

mobile pawns pawns that are not blocked and can move up the board quickly and easily

mobility see piece activity

open file a file not blocked by any pawns

open pawn structures a position with no pawns blocking the free movement of the pieces

opening the opening phase, or first ten or so moves of the game, when most of the pieces are developed and the kings typically castle

opposite-colored bishops situation when each player has one bishop remaining on the board, with each bishop traveling on different colored squares where they cannot attack each other

opposite side castling when one player castles on the kingside and the other player castles on the queenside

opposition the situation that occurs when the kings face each other on a file or rank with a square between them where the player who is on the move is often in *zugzwang* because when his moves his king, the opponent’s king may have access to important squares

outpost a strong square, usually in the opponent’s territory, where a piece (usually a knight) is safe, protected by a pawn, and cannot be attacked by an enemy pawn

outside passed pawn the passed pawn furthest away from the other pawn clusters where the main battle will take place

overloading when a defensive piece is given an additional defensive responsibility which it cannot complete without abandoning its original defensive assignment

overprotection a preventative measure where multiple pieces defend the same point

overworked piece a piece that has to protect two pieces (or squares) at the same time that often can be taken advantage of tactically

partial pin when a queen or rook is pinned along the same file or rank or a queen or bishop is pinned along the same diagonal

passed pawn a pawn that can move all the way up the board to its promotion square without being blocked or captured by an enemy pawn

passive holding back; not aggressive

pawn (symbol – left blank) the least valuable piece that can only move in a forward direction, captures diagonally, and can promote to another piece, usually the queen, when it reaches the other side of the board

pawn arrow a line from the player's side of the board toward the opponent's side of the board made by a pawn chain that is locked up on two or more files; pawn arrows point in the direction where the player has more space and generally wants to attack

pawn chain pawns on files next to each other that are connected in a diagonal line, so they protect each other

pawn grabbing snatching a pawn away from where the main action is taking place before completing development, giving the opponent time to gain an advantage in piece mobility

pawn storm a tactic in which several pawns on adjacent files are moved in rapid succession toward the opponent's defenses

perpetual check the most common type of threefold repetition, when the player who is usually losing the game forces a position where he can check the other king back and forth forever

piece activity having pieces on good squares where they can move freely and have multiple options

pieces knights, bishops, rooks, queens, or kings (pawns are referred to as pawns)

pin when a long-range piece (queen, rook, or bishop) attacks an opponent's piece that is shielding another piece of greater value

process of elimination a decision making process where, to find the best move, you eliminate legal moves that you determine are clearly not the best move; see also candidate moves

promotion or **promoting a pawn** when a pawn moves all the way across the board to the eighth rank and turns into another piece, usually a queen

protected when a piece is defended by another piece, usually making it a bad idea for the opponent to capture it

protected passed pawn a passed pawn that is protected by a neighboring pawn

queen (symbol – Q) a major piece worth nine pawns and most powerful piece on the board that moves in any direction in a straight line horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, until it runs into another piece or the edge of the board

queenside the half of the board where the queens begin the game (the a-, b-, c-, and d-files)

queenside majority having more pawns on the queenside than the opponent

raking bishops a potent attacking force when bishops are placed on adjacent diagonals in an open position

ranks the chess term for rows of eight squares that run horizontally across a chess board

relative pin when the piece shielded by the pinned piece is any piece other than the king

relative skewer when a piece other than the king is first in the line of attack by a long-range piece

removing the guard eliminating or forcing a piece to move that is protecting one or more pieces or squares

resign a gracious way to lose a chess game, typically signified by tipping over one's king, in a hopeless position

roller mate a type of checkmate where typically a rook and queen (or two rooks or two queens) take turns moving one square past each other in order to shrink the box around the opposing king, eventually leading to checkmate

rook (symbol – R) a major piece worth five pawns that moves horizontally or vertically and left and right until it runs into another piece or the edge of the board

rook lift moving a rook forward, usually to the third rank, and then in front of pawns on the second rank, where it can then attack on a file into the opponent's territory

royal fork a fork of the king and queen

sacrifice giving up material in order to gain some other type of advantage or checkmate

Scholar's Mate (also known as the four-move checkmate) a quick, easily avoided checkmate pattern where one player wins by bringing his queen out early in the game

score sheet a special piece of paper with spaces for usually 60 moves for each player to record a chess game

skewer a type of tactic that is the reverse of a pin, where the more valuable piece is in front of the less valuable piece

smothered mate when a knight checkmates the king where the king is unable to move because he is surrounded by his own pieces, usually in the corner of the board (sometimes referred to as Philidor's mate) because the king's escape choices are most limited there

space an element of chess, related to piece activity, referring to the number of squares controlled by each of the players

square of the pawn an imaginary square the defending king must get into in order to win the race to the promotion square to prevent the opponent's pawn from promoting

stalemate a type of draw where the player to move has no legal moves and is not in check

starting position where the pieces are located at the beginning of all chess games with White to move

symmetrical pawn structure a pawn structure where on each file one player has a pawn, the other player has a pawn opposing it

tactics immediate threats and attacks that make up the battles between pieces

target a weakness in the position the attacker can attack; sometimes a piece, sometimes a square

tempi two or more moves, relating to time

tempo a single move, relating to time

threat an aggressive move that attacks an opposing piece

"touch move" rule tournament rule that states if a player touches one of his pieces, he must move it, if he can legally

"touch take" rule tournament rule that states if a player touches an opponent's piece, he must capture it, if he can legally

trade pieces to exchange pieces of equal value

transposing moves changing the move order to reach the same future position

threefold repetition draw a draw that happens when the same position on the board occurs three different times

tripled isolated pawns three pawns lined up vertically on the same file with no pawn on a file next to them to provide protection

tripled pawns three pawns lined up vertically on the same file with a pawn on a file next to them that can provide protection

uncastled king a king that has not castled and is usually in the middle of the board

underpromoting promoting a pawn to a rook, bishop, or knight instead of a queen for strategic reasons such as avoiding a stalemate

variation a logical alternate sequence of moves different from the main line

weakness a pawn or square that can be easily attacked by the opponent and is difficult to defend

White player with the light-colored pieces who moves first in the game

White move a move by the player playing the White pieces written in algebraic notation by giving the move number, followed by a period, and then the move; for example, 15.Nf3

winning the exchange gaining a rook for a knight or bishop

X-ray similar concept to a skewer when a piece "looks through" an enemy piece toward a target (often a mating square) or defends a friendly piece through an enemy piece

zugzwang a German word meaning "compulsion to move", usually occurring in the endgame when there are fewer available moves, a player is "in *zugzwang*" when it is his move and every possible move makes his position worse, but he is obligated to move and cannot pass his turn

7th rank the rank where the opponent's pawns begin the game

8th rank the rank furthest away from the player, where his own pawns would promote; also where the opponent's pieces begin the game

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

At age six, Todd learned how to play chess from his father, Alan Bardwick, an expert strength tournament player. Alan utilized many of the chess teaching ideas presented in Chess Detective workbook series.

Back in the 1970's, when few children played in rated chess tournaments, Todd consistently improved his game and was nationally ranked in his age group.

After leading his high school chess team to several state titles, Todd went to college and graduated first in his class from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1985 with a B.S. in Civil Engineering. After college, he moved to San Diego for five years where he worked as a rocket scientist (structural analyst).

Moving back to Denver in late 1989, he worked as an entrepreneur and continued playing chess. In 1993, Todd achieved the National Master title awarded by the United States Chess Federation.

Of Todd's numerous tournament achievements, most notable is winning the Denver Open Championship five consecutive years (1992-1996) against strong competition, where his performance rating was over 2400.

Beginning in 1993 until the newspaper's closing in 2009, he wrote a popular monthly chess column in the Rocky Mountain News, one of the nation's largest newspapers.

In 1995, Todd founded the annual Rocky Mountain Chess camp which is one of the oldest chess camps in the country. Students come from across the nation to participate in the camp.

In 2002, "The Chess Detective" column was born in *School Mates* magazine. From 2003 to 2017, "The Chess Detective" was featured in *Chess Life for Kids*, the national children's chess magazine published by the United States

Chess Federation.

For over a quarter of a century, Todd has been one of the country's leading full-time chess-teaching masters. He has taught well over 15,000 chess classes and is a Professional Chess Coach (Level V), the highest level recognized by the United States Chess Federation. Having a STEM background, Todd's logical and fun approach to the game and reputation as an excellent teacher inspired him to found the Chess Academy of Denver where he teaches well over 750 students per year through private lessons, school classes, chess camps, and year-round camp workshops for adults and children.

Educationally, Todd runs school district chess programs, teaches in Gifted and Talented programs, and trains parents and teachers how to effectively teach chess to children in their school enrichment programs to improve a child's math skills using chess as a vehicle. Todd also regularly trains elementary school teachers who want to learn how to incorporate chess and its educational benefits into their classrooms.

Todd's students have achieved accolades in life and chess. Successes include gaining early admission to top universities, like Stanford and Yale, becoming Presidential Scholars, being ranked number one in chess in the United States for their age group and winning numerous state and national chess titles.

In 2004, Todd completed his first book, *Teaching Chess in the 21st Century – Strategies and Connections to a Standards-Based World*, a comprehensive guide to teaching chess as part of the elementary school math curriculum.

The success of *Teaching Chess in the 21st Century* prompted Todd to write the companion book, *Chess Workbook for Children – The Chess Detective's Introduction to the Royal Game* in 2006 which is currently translated into three other languages and is sold throughout the world.

Published in 2010, *Chess Strategy Workbook – A Blueprint for Developing the Best Plan* is an intermediate book that teaches how to think logically during the game and develop the correct plan.

In 2019, Todd published *Chess Tactics and Combinations Workbook – Winning the Battles Between the Pieces* and *Attacking the Chess King Workbook – Patterns and Strategies for Successful Attacks*. Along with *Chess Strategy Workbook*, these books form a series for the intermediate level and rated chess player.

In 2019, Todd also published *Chess Concepts and Coloring Book for Kids*, a coloring and beginner book for younger kids.

In 2020, Todd published *Chess Handbook – Rules, Tactics, and Strategies for the Improving Player*, a comprehensive chess book for beginner and intermediate players.

Published in 2021, *Chess Endgame Workbook – Acquiring Skills to Win Close Games* expands the series for the intermediate level and rated chess player.

Published in 2022, *Chess Openings – An Overview of Standard Variations* gives major and minor opening variations with easy-to-read flow charts to aid the reader in selecting suitable opening systems to begin their games.

Todd is available for speaking engagements, chess teacher training, chess lessons, chess classes, and simultaneous chess exhibitions. Todd can be reached through his website at www.ColoradoMasterChess.com.

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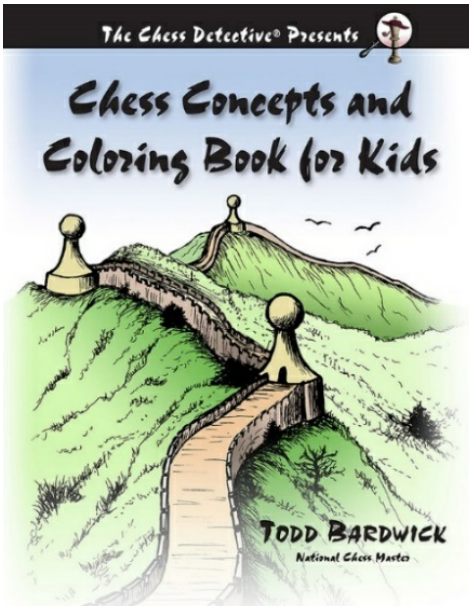
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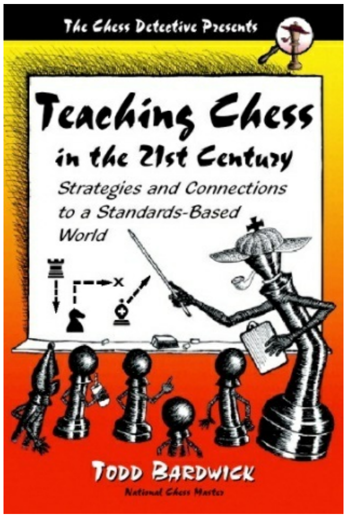
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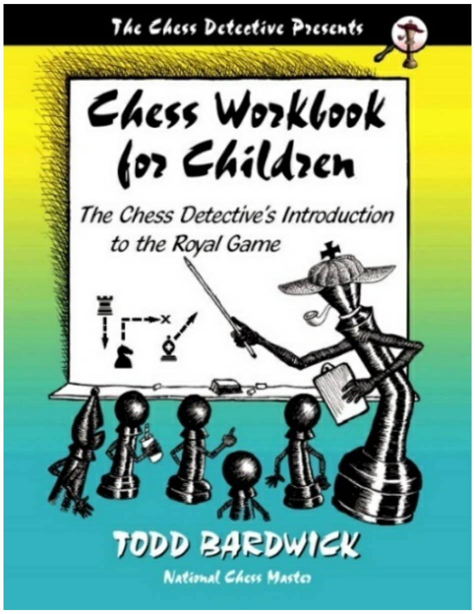
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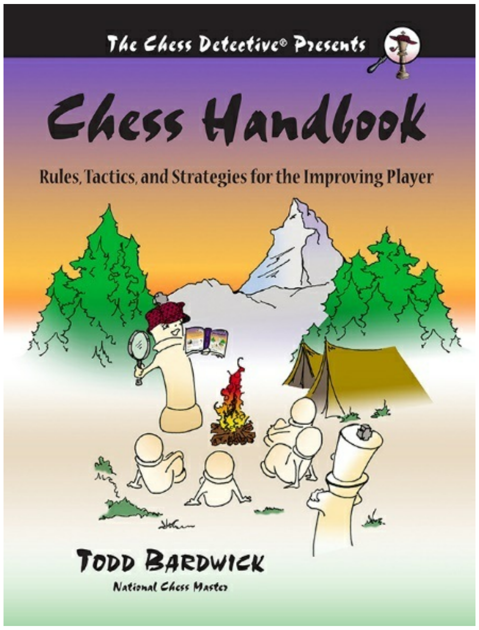
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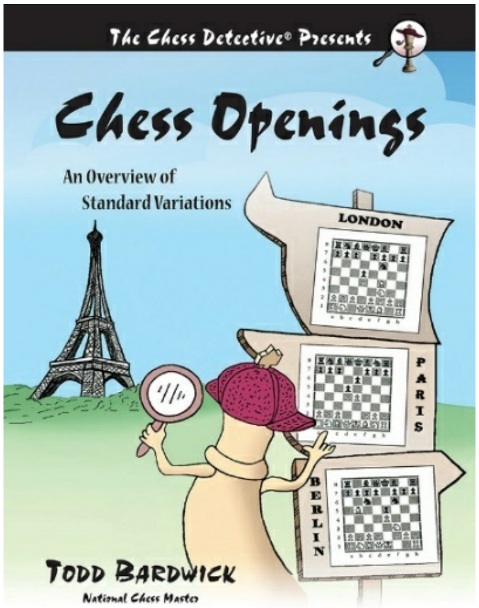
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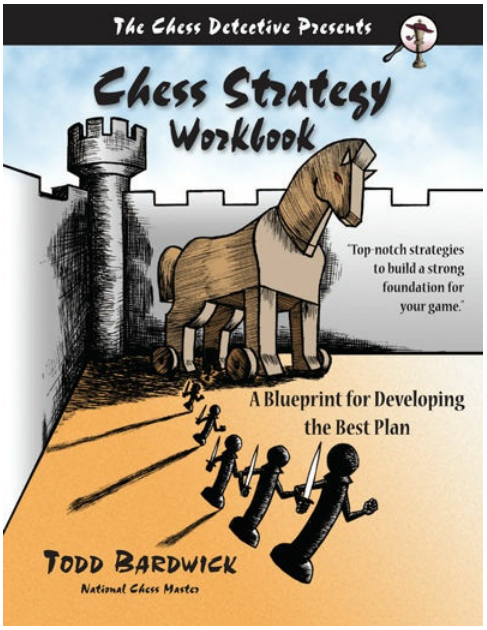
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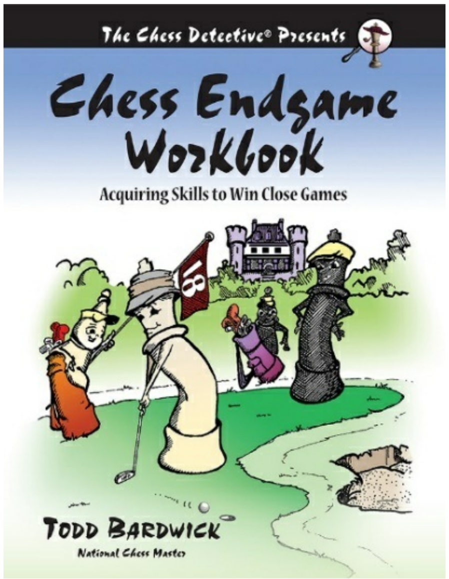
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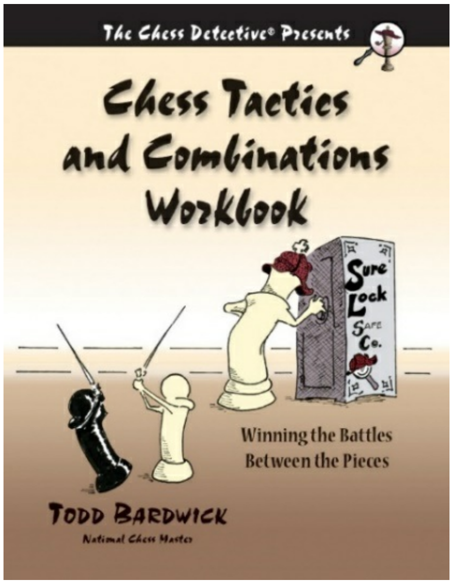
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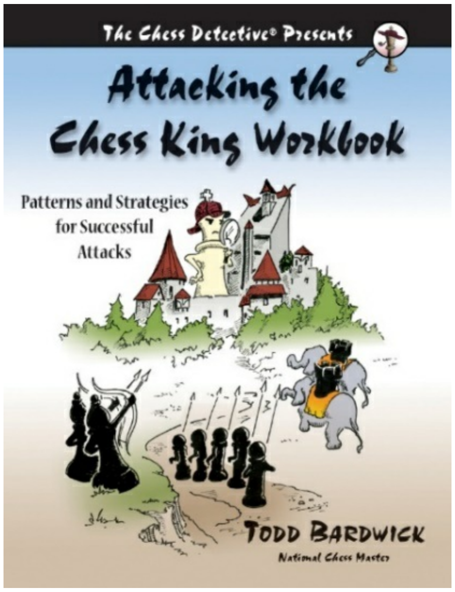
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